

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO
UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE DI MILANO
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI GENOVA
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PAVIA

PhD PROGRAM
POLITICAL STUDIES – 30th cohort

DOCTORAL THESIS

**The Recognition Process:
Explaining the Compresence of Prosocial and
Antisocial Behaviours in International Politics**

SPS/04, SPS/01, SPS/11

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ACADEMIC YEAR 2016/2017

The PhD programme in Political Studies (POLS) (30th cohort) stems from the collaboration of four universities, namely, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, Università degli Studi di Genova, Università degli Studi di Milano, and Università degli Studi di Pavia. The University of Milan serves as the administrative headquarters and provides the facilities for most teaching activities.

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Introduction

This research addresses the concept of the Recognition Process as currently advanced by International Relations (IR) theory.

IR theory while seeking to formulate an alternative explanation to international politics based on identity-related issues, called attention back to the process of identity formation, which furtherly opened space for the development of the current IR formulation of the recognition process.

In the beginning of 1990s, filo-constructivist IR literature while drawing on recognition studies as developed long before in the fields of Political Psychology, Sociology and Political Theory, has developed a theoretical framework for recognition process that builds on the idea that the process of recognition requires the candidate actors (those actors that seek for identity recognition) to comply with the rules and norms of the group whose recognition they are longing for.

Therefore, current IR literature on recognition process expects that a state seeking for status recognition will behave in conformity and compliance with international norms and rules shared by the international society – which can grant or withhold its recognition.

The IR theoretical framework on recognition process, together with formulations on status seeking, constitute the basis for the above mentioned alternative explanation to international politics. Indeed, this alternative explanation to international politics explains peaceful and conflictual relations as the opposite results of accomplishment, or failure, of the social-relational recognition process.

Yet, these shared expectations of prosocial compliance in the international standing of status seekers meets its shortcomings when confronted with status seekers' foreign policies that, next to compliant behaviours, perform also non-compliant behaviours.

This mixed articulation of the international behavioural strategies adopted by status seekers underlines the limits of the current framework on recognition process.

The thesis addresses this mismatch between the theoretical formulation and empirical puzzling observations, and aims at advancing a theoretical framework able to give a comprehensive explanation of the compresence of prosocial (complying) and antisocial (deviant) behaviours within international politics.

The thesis moves from an analysis of the IR literature on identity formation and its important component: the process of recognition. Chapter 1 focuses on introducing the concept of the *recognition process*, its related characteristics, and the developed *alternative explanations to international politics* based on the conception of the recognition process. Chapter 2 focuses on highlighting the shortcomings of the two *alternative explanations of international politics* based on recognition studies which are able to explain the presence of complying or deviant behaviours in the international arena but fall short in explaining their compresence. In addition, some alternative explanations that attempt to justify the simultaneous observation of prosocial and antisocial behaviours are also taken into consideration.

In Chapter 3 interesting findings from developmental peer relations studies on children and adolescents are introduced. After a review of this sociological research field and the conceptual and theoretical evolution that took place at the end of the 1990s, the research deals with the concepts and findings that can prove useful to IR to close the gap between the theoretical conceptualization of the recognition process and the empirical observations of interactions within the international arena. The concepts of *popularity* and *likeability* are introduced and reviewed in their differences as distinct constructs – respectively measuring social standing (reputation) and interpersonal emotional affection (liking/being liked).

Moreover, the chapter also focusses on reporting the content of the new findings achieved by development-psychological studies which confirm the existence of a link between *popularity* status and both prosocial and antisocial behaviours. The chapter analyses the features of this relation which suggests that popularity status is pursued by kids and adolescents by combining deviant behaviours with complying behaviours, in a functional bi-strategic combination. Attention is also paid to the processes adopted by kids to pursue likeability status, this in order to distinguish the two different processes which aim at seeking different social statuses.

The last part of chapter 3 is devoted to the translation of these findings to the IR field. The section presents the reader with arguments in favour of the adoption of these concepts and findings. Next to the illustration of the advantages, attention is

also paid to the risks of borrowing findings from a sociological field, and especially from studies specifically developed on kids and adolescents.

This section devotes also to a specific translation of the concepts introduced in chapter 3 – among which popularity and likeability, *in primis* – and also of the findings that were achieved in these developmental studies, and the implications that these conclusions have on the current IR formulation of the recognition process.

The idea according which status seekers perform only conformingly during their status seeking process gives way to the assumption that, even in the international arena, status seekers that are seeking for reputational status (comparable to popularity status for kids) do perform a mixed combination of deviant and compliant behaviours. This suggests that it is possible to understand the observation of *deviant* behaviours adopted by revisionist status seekers, as a possible manifestation of deviant behaviours that have been adopted functionally (in combination with complying ones) and specifically ahead of the status seeking strategy.

These hypotheses are addressed in chapter 4 which is devoted to the empirical case study. The empirical analysis examines the specific case of Italian foreign policy during the first half of the Mussolini Government. After having presented the linearity of the case study with the intentions of the research, and after a historical contextualization, the chapter turns to highlighting the characteristics of the case.

Attentions is devoted to pointing out the fact that the Italian foreign policy of this period was the foreign policy of a status seeker. Building on this, the following sections are devoted to a closer analysis of Italian international standing and behaviours.

The chapter is built by reporting historical documentations, speeches and also by making reference to secondary literature.

The analysis turns around some of the most well-known deviant behaviours adopted by the Italian government, and aims at highlighting, through historical documentation, the intentions behind those behaviours.

The research is led by the intention to understand if these deviant behaviours have been adopted in order to pursue Italian great power ambitions (which would confirm the functional use of deviant behaviours ahead of status and recognition seeking strategies); and also, the circumstances under which these behaviours have been implemented (if in combination with compliant behaviours).

This investigation is conducted by referring to the historical documentation of public speeches, but also by referring at private diplomatic missives exchanged between the central government and the Italian representatives abroad.

From the analysis of this documentation, it emerges that the deviant behaviours charactering the Italian international standing in those years were adopted ahead of the Italian status seeking process. Italy, being a revisionist (but not revolutionary) power, pursued the recognition of its prestige as a great power by adopting behaviours that didn't limit to international compliance, but on contrary, insisted on deviant behaviours.

In the conclusion, it is reported that this opens the way to reconception of the current IR formulation, and expectations, of the recognition process.

Chapter 1

1 – Recognition studies: the transfer to the IR field

Recognition studies entered the field of International Relations around the second half of the 1990s. The cross-disciplinary transfer was supported and implemented primarily by scholars professing their focus on constructivist ontology, be it moderate or radical (Geis et al., 2015, 4-5). This "application of recognition as a social science concept" (Geis et al., 2015, 4-5) to the IR field built on insights from recognition studies that emerged from the fields of Political Theory, Social Philosophy and Social Psychology and identified common ground with the typical constructivist perspective according to which social interaction has a constitutive (creative) upside, even in the realm of international politics¹.

Introducing recognition studies to IR and moving the focus of these studies "beyond the purely formal modes of state recognition" took – according to the same IR recognition scholars – "a long time" (Geis et al., 2015, 11). The complaint regarding this delay refers to the fact that fields of Political Theory and Social Philosophy focussed on the social dynamics related to recognition (and misrecognition) long before IR scholars slowly started "keeping up with the cross-disciplinary transfer of recognition theory to the field of international politics". More specifically, when the field of Political Theory started to focus on 'recognition debates', the IR field was still experiencing the 'constructivist turn'. A period of time passed before IR scholars as well reoriented their interest towards recognition issues (Geis et al., 2015, 9).

From the constructivist perspective, trailblazers of this strand of research were Erik Ringmar (1996, 2002) and Alexander Wendt (1999, 2003)².

¹ Geis et al., 2015, 23: "For detailed treatments of individual recognition-related contribution in International Relations, see, for example, Bartelson (2013); Dimitrova (2013); Greenhill (2008); Strömbom (2013) and Wolf (2011)."

² According to Brian Greenhill (2008), Ringmar and Wendt represent two sub-strands within the IR recognition studies. Both sub-lines of research aim at understanding the role played by recognition within international interactions. However, in the first case, the line developed by Ringmar focusses on understanding the relationship between struggles for recognition and international state behaviour. "Ringmar argues that the desire to have a particular type of identity recognized by one's interlocutors can often provide a far more compelling explanation of state behaviour than traditional explanations that focus only on material factors" (Greenhill, 2008, 344). Conversely, the line of research developed by Wendt makes some steps forward and focusses on the role that recognition processes play at the international level specifically in the formation of "a single overarching *collective* identity" (Greenhill, 2008, 345). Indeed, while drawing from Hegel's theory of recognition, Wendt moves from highlighting the

2 – Formulating an alternative explanation for international politics based on recognition studies

The fact that the introduction of recognition studies to the IR field was initiated by constructivist scholars did have consequences on the new IR strand of research. Actually, the cross-disciplinary transfer of recognition studies' insights to IR was, from the point of view of constructivist scholars, functional to the main IR disciplinary division concerning alternative explanations for international politics (Geis et al., 2015, 5). Indeed, by engaging in the broader IR debate, recognition scholars did note the limits of the traditional 'rationalist approaches to international politics' that focus attention exclusively on a *materialistic explanation* of international conflict but overlook the role played by other 'non-material factors', among which are the identity-related issues. Hence, insights from Political Theory, Social Psychology and Social Philosophy were used as a basis to formulate an alternative theory of action within IR that could depart from the traditional one focussed on issues of instrumental rationality and material interests and focus instead on identity matters. In Wolf's words,

"Contemporary scholars therefore readily attribute an escalation of a conflict to an escalation of risks or to an increased interest in the contested material resources, instead of looking for additional incentives rooted in an actor's identity needs. In this way, many social scientists almost habitually take it for granted that once they have found a plausible explanation based on material incentives there is no further need to look for other motivational factors that might also be involved" (Wolf, 2011, 132-133).

Therefore, IR recognition scholars support the need to give more room (in alternative, or also next to the traditionally favoured material resources) to "other motivational factors", particularly those related to identity and identity formation issues (Greenhill, 2008). As reported by Michelle Murray (2014),

importance of recognition in the formation of the individual self to highlighting the possible consequences of a recognition process in the formation of a collective identity that could develop into the 'World State' (see Wendt 2003, Greenhill, 2008). In antithesis to this, and by drawing on "empirical findings of psychological research on identity formation", Greenhill (2008) builds a critical analysis of the predictive findings asserted by Wendt with the intent of downsizing the "far-reaching role" assigned by Wendt to 'recognition' – see Greenhill (2008) for more details.

This research will focus on the first sub-strand of research, the one developed by Ringmar and focussed on the relationship between state behaviour and recognition politics as an explanatory factor of (peaceful or conflictual) international politics.

"Unlike dominant rationalist approaches to international politics, which assume states are primarily concerned with physical security and maximizing power, recognition scholars contend establishing and maintaining an identity is also an important dimension of foreign policy" (Murray, 2014, 558).

Hence, although after a delay, constructivists were able to bring in the recognition theory with the intent of establishing an alternative explanation for international peace and conflict.

2.1 – The need to assert and prove the relevance of identity-related issues and its consequences

The fact that IR recognition studies were introduced to IR as part of the main disciplinary debate reflected on both the basic assumptions that recognition scholars used as a basis for their studies and the evolution of the IR recognition studies itself. In particular, the attempt and the need to build an alternative explanation of international politics based on identity-related issues required scholars to assert and prove the relevance of identity itself. In a first stage of the development of this strand of research, this new focus of research was based on and built around the juxtaposition of *matters of identity* and *matters of interest*.

Indeed, IR recognition studies were introduced as an *alternative* to the rationalist and materialist approaches. This approach implied that recognition studies were used by constructivist scholars as an argument in favour of the relevance of identity-related issues and in opposition to the materialist ones that for years have induced scholars to adopt (and build around) an *antithetical perspective* that opposes matters of interest to matters of identity. Although this antithetical approach has recently started to lose its momentum³ (Geis et al., 2015, 5-6), it nonetheless has deeply – and at length – affected the IR literature on recognition.

³ Most of the IR literature on recognition studies draws from Ringmar's and Wendt's studies published in the second half of the 1990s (see for example: Ringmar, 1996; Wendt, 1999, and following ones). Considering that both authors undertake an antithetical approach to traditional rationalist-materialist explanations, it is possible to conclude that most of the IR literature on recognition tacitly implies this approach. However, with the volume *Recognition in International Relations: Rethinking a Political Concept in a Global Context*, edited by Fehl and Kolliarakis (2015) – one of the most updated and complete on IR recognition research, which has the aim of covering to the maximum extent the internal sub-strands of this research topic – this antithetical perspective contraposing matters of identity to matters of interest is directly addressed as an element to be overcome in favour of a more conciliatory perspective that contemplates compatibility between the two options (see below). The focus indeed moves from the

The adoption of this antithetical perspective finds its rationale in the need for the neo-established constructivist perspective to support and prove the relevance and validity of identity-related issues as explanatory elements of international politics. This need to show that 'identity matters' was built around the formulation of an alternative assumption concerning the concept of the self.

2.2 – Assumption 1: identity is created (instead of being 'given')

Recognition scholars build on alternative assumptions, the first of which refers to the idea that identity, instead of being 'given', is 'created' and 'formed' through a process of social interaction. IR scholars draw on insights emerging from the fields of Political Theory, Social Psychology and Philosophy, and in particular, they focus on an alternative conceptualization of identity and of the identity formation process – abandoning Hobbes in favour of Hegel and Honneth.

A more-detailed examination reveals that to support the relevance of identity, IR recognition scholars draw from social and philosophical concepts of identity formation. In particular, these scholars integrate the 'sociological' concept of the self as opposed to the 'atomistic' concept of the self as conceived by Hobbes (see Ringmar, 2002, 120). The sociological concept of the self asserts that identity is not *a priori given* (atomistic) but instead is created and formed through a process of social interaction. Therefore, it is important to focus on the process of 'formation of identity', which is needed for one to come to exist. It thus follows that the formation of identity necessarily comes before the formation and articulation of interests because only after one comes to exist (has an identity) can she start building her interests on the basis of her identity.

consideration that it is possible to strengthen the IR recognition strand of research and to deepen the understanding of the "politics, motives, and effects of recognition" by leaving behind this "overly narrow and oversimplified reading of the concept of recognition" (Geis et al., 2015, 5-6). As reported by Geis (et al., 2015, 4), given the importance of this quite recent and underdeveloped IR strand of research, "political conflicts over claiming, granting, and withholding recognition in international society (...) should become a central subject of analysis". However, one can debate whether this intent is declared but achieved only through a collection of different works, some of which undertake the antithetical perspective; however, a more homogeneous structure is still missing. Although the intent of overcoming this antithetical perspective is not fully implemented, it is appreciably the declared intent to do so.

To prove that the formation of identity comes first, then interests, scholars move from criticizing the atomistic concept of the self as conceived by Hobbes. For example, Erik Ringmar asserts that

"(...) since the preservation of the self was a right that existed already in the state of nature, it follows that selves, for Hobbes, must have existed already before men entered into interaction with each other. The self was given by nature and formed prior to, and outside of, social life. The self was an atomistic unit, and as such was the fundamental building-block from which a theory of society could be constructed (Taylor, 1979/1985: 187-210)" (Ringmar, 2002, 118).

In opposition to this perspective and concept, Ringmar supports the sociological concept of the self, according to which the self *is created* only within social interactions. Indeed (by building on Pizzorno, 1986, 367), the author asserts that,

"We can develop a sense of self only as we come to see our selves as others do, and once we learn to take the point of view of the 'generalized other'. We need others to describe us as persons of a certain kind; people who continuously can recognize us under a certain description. Only if described, and if recognized, in this manner will we be able to keep our selves stable as we move between different spatial and temporal contexts (Pizzorno, 1986: 367)" (Ringmar, 2002, 118).

Therefore, from this perspective, identity loses its atomistic character and becomes an object of negotiation. Identity is *created* and not given; it is negotiated through and within social interaction. In Ringmar's words, the self "is created through social communication" (2002, 118). Hence, by contesting that identity is given, scholars do support the idea that identity must be formed before interests. Again, per Ringmar,

"It follows, as a point of logic, that questions regarding interests can only begin to be discussed once questions regarding identities have been settled, at least in a preliminary fashion. It is only once we know who we are that we can know what we want. If this point is accepted, a theory of rational action will always come to presuppose a theory of how identities are created, established and maintained" (Ringmar, 2002, 118).

The importance of identity with respect to international behaviour is proven by challenging the assumption according to which identity is *given*. Alternatively, claiming that identity is *created* entails that identity itself requires and implies a process of *identity formation*. Thus, identity becomes the object of a process of negotiation that occurs through social interaction. Scholars claim that a process of identity formation is

necessary for (and comes before) the formation of interests; they come full circle and prove the relevance of identity-related issues.

Based on the above findings, identity and the identity formation process become a relevant element to examine and investigate to understand the relationship that exists between these identity-related issues and international politics.

2.3 – Process of identity formation: the role of the self and of the others

By building on Hegel's perspective, scholars outline the process of identity formation as composed on the one hand by "a question of the stories that individuals tell about themselves" – the *proposal* and the *demand* of self-perceived and desired identity. On the other hand, there is the complementary process of recognition granted by the social group (Ringmar, 2012, 6).

In Ringmar's words, in this first stage, the actor forms his self-perceived identity in solitude and autonomy: "We make up an account, or we make up many, which describe ourselves to ourselves" (Ringmar, 2012, 6).

However, the complementary part becomes necessary due to the limitations of the solitary effort in self-identity formation; the solitary efforts yields poor results because of the limits of the isolation in which the effort occurs. Indeed, as reported by Ringmar,

"The problem with these self-descriptions is that they often are faulty. Unfettered in our fantasies, we are wont to exaggerate our importance and our prospects or, alternatively, we are only too ready to accept the accounts, handed down to us by society and tradition, of what a person like ourselves is supposed to be" (Ringmar, 2012, 6).

The author is quite drastic in asserting the persistent inability of the individual to describe his or herself. In fact, Ringmar reports that we might exaggerate, or we might be submissive; however, "In either case, we will be mistaken about ourselves" (Ringmar, 2012, 6). Similarly, even when one can give a "reasonable realistic" description of one's self, the author highlights further limits of the solitary formation of self-identity:

"Above all, since we can never see ourselves except awkwardly and in fleeting moments in a mirror, we have only limited knowledge of what we look like while interacting with others" (Ringmar, 2012, 6).

Given these limitations of the individual self-concept of self-identity, the equilibrating role of the others in the identity formation process is highlighted by the author as extremely important for the formation of identity.

Therefore, next to the initial self-formation of identity, the process of identity formation also needs the social-relational part of it. Indeed, as reported by Ringmar,

"Other people, by contrast, are wont to describe us far more realistically. They are unlikely to exaggerate our importance or our looks, but equally, they may be able to see potential in us that we have ignored. After all, other people have privileged perspective, too: seeing us from the outside, they know far better what we are like as *social* beings (...) identities are created through an interplay of these two alternative perspectives. We start by telling stories about ourselves, which we go on to test on people around us. We let other people know who we believe we are, and they let us know whether or not our account is reasonable. In this way, our stories about ourselves are or are not recognized" (Ringmar, 2012, 6).

Therefore, one can come to exist in a certain self-perceived or self-conceived identity only if that same identity is recognized by others as valid and reasonable with respect to the candidate identity; therefore, it is confirmed (it is *recognized*). Under this concept, the *others* have the important role of giving confirmation of the identity and existence of the 'candidate' (the identity seeker). It is only this external validation that provides confirmation that the self-conceived identity is also 'reflected' from the outside, thus confirming its existence.

In brief, the self-formation of identity is not sufficient; interplay with the rest of the social group is required. Actually, the process of identity formation comprises both the demand from the identity-seeker and recognition by the social group.

2.4 – Two corollaries: identity is essential; identity is relational

Beginning with the assumption that identity is created and not given paves the way for the research to focus on the role that identity and the required identity formation process play with respect to international action, behaviour and politics.

In addition to the assumption asserting that identity requires a formation process, IR recognition scholars also introduce two corollaries that are relevant to understand this relationship. These two corollaries attempt to shed light on the implications for international actions that follow from the fact that identity is *formed* through a social

process. In other words, scholars highlight which effects result from the fact that identity requires a formation process – which are the characteristics of this formation process.

Therefore, beginning with the abovementioned sociological assumption of the self, scholars conceive identity not only as being 'created' but also as being *fundamental and relational*.

The first corollary states that the idea according to which identity is fundamental means that identity is 'essential for one's existence'. Indeed, this concept builds on the idea according to which identity responds to the inherent human desire to distinguish oneself from the rest of nature and from other peers (Ringmar, 2002). This desire is profound and responds to the concept well expressed by Ringmar, according to which "without an identity, we have no idea of who we are" (Ringmar, 2012, 3); therefore, identity is fundamental for one's existence and self-identification.

It is also possible to relate this character of the concept of identity to the abovementioned juxtaposition between identity and interests; from the antithetical perspective on identity, indeed, the formation of identity is necessary so that the formation of interests can build on it.

This concept strengthens the characteristic of essentiality of identity; indeed, with identity this relevant – related in fact to one's existence – it then follows that one will long for it. In Ringmar's words, "Identities matter (...). In fact, few things matter more than the identities we put together for ourselves" (Ringmar, 2012, 3).

Together with this profound human desire to come to exist with an individual identity, to distinguish one's self from the rest, identity is also characterized by being *relational*. Identity is relational because it is formed in the presence and due to the presences, of other individuals. Therefore, the formation process – implied by the assumption according to which identity is created and not given – requires the presence (and confirmation) of *others* for the formation process itself to be completed. To give a handy example of the relational character of identity, in his 1996 publication, Ringmar associates the formation of identity with 'story-telling' that needs an audience. From this perspective, story-telling requires the presence of an audience because "meaning cannot be created by one individual in isolation from all others; just as there cannot be such a thing as a private language, meanings cannot exist only in the privacy of one person's mind" (Ringmar, 1996, 80). The basic idea is that no

identity exists in solitude. Indeed, the "logic of identity creation", as Ringmar calls it, is based on social interaction; "We need to come up with an account that describes us, but in addition, we need to have this account accepted by people around us. We need to be *recognized*" (Ringmar, 2012, 3).

In fact, the identity formation process and the recognition process go hand in hand. In particular, the recognition process (the process through which others give their confirmation of the identity of the individual) is a fundamental component of the identity formation process that can be completed only in the presence of this second component. Given the relational character of identity and identity formation, the recognition granted by others is fundamental for the process of identity formation to be (successfully) accomplished.

Actually, "Which stories we can tell and what persons we can become is not given by the limits of our imagination, but depends instead ultimately on the *validity* of the descriptions we come up with"⁴ (Ringmar, 1996, 80). However, this point also implies that 'the validity of the description we come up with' is proved by testing it "in interaction with the others" (Ringmar, 1996, 80).

Based on the above, the fact that the others that have the power to confirm or disconfirm the 'validity' of the self-conceived identity implies that the process of identity formation corresponds to – and is composed of – the process of identity recognition; the internally self-conceived identity one comes up with must be confirmed (or disconfirmed) by the others. As claimed by Ringmar,

"we ask our audiences to *recognise us* as the kinds of persons that our stories identify. Only if they affirm the validity of the description have we survived the test; *only as recognised can we conclusively come to establish a certain identity*. In this way all stories that we tell about our selves will come to make tacit demands on their listeners: 'this is what I am like!', 'recognise me under this description!'⁵ (Ringmar, 1996, 81).

Hence, the 'logic of identity creation' also includes the process of recognition, and this process occurs both at the social individual level as much as at the world politics level.

⁴ *Italic in the original text.*

⁵ *Italic in the original text.*

"States too are coming up with self-descriptions and struggling to have them recognized. In fact, the struggle for recognition takes up much of a state's time and resources, and it makes states act and interact in specific ways" (Ringmar, 2012, 3).

2.5 – Assumption 2: recognition is granted on the basis of a constitutive perspective

It is helpful to introduce in this section the 'declarative' and the 'constitutive' perspective concerning the conferral of international statehood, which is typical of the international law debate (Ringmar, 2012, 10-11; Oppenheim, 1912, 174). Indeed, within the field of international law, discussions focus on whether *statehood* is conceded based on 'constitutive' or 'declarative' requirements (Ringmar, 2012). The *declarative view* requires the candidate-state to possess certain 'qualities' and to respond to certain requirements as expected (in that historical moment and space and from that specific group) by the rest of the states (society). The basic idea is that "a state is a state as long as it fulfils a few minimal requirements"; therefore, according to the *declarative view*, statehood is granted in return for the fulfilment of certain specific requirements (Ringmar, 2012, 10).

Conversely, the *constitutive view* provides that the key element for the assignment of statehood is 'recognition'. Indeed, as reported by Ringmar, from this perspective, "A state that is not recognized may exist in itself but never for itself; that is, it has no status as subject of international law and diplomacy⁶" (Ringmar, 2012, 10). Therefore, a state might have the requirements of statehood other states have – "a permanent population; a clearly defined territory; and a government with the ability to govern itself, to defend itself, and to enter into relations with the other states". However, as required by the *constitutive perspective*, to be officially assigned with statehood, it must count upon social recognition conferred by the other states in the system (Ringmar, 2012, 10).

It is therefore clear that the 'access threshold' lies not in the abilities of the candidate to respond to specific requirements of statehood but rather in the hands of the group

⁶ The author refers to Oppenheim, 1912, 117; cf. Kelsen, 1941, 605-617.

that has the power to recognize or misrecognize the candidate and can decide whether to accept it as a 'member' of the group of states. Alternatively, it lies in the ability of the candidate to induce the group to grant it the desired recognition.

By borrowing these two concepts and leaving aside the specific elements concerning statehood – or statehood in a certain particular historical moment – these two concepts can prove useful in analysing the perspective of IR studies on recognition.

Given the assumptions underlying this perspective in studies, this strand of research (based on the abovementioned assumptions and built from this perspective) is in line with the constitutive perspective.

Indeed, considering that in the previous sections, it has emerged that the process of identity formation necessarily requires consensus by the audience, this point can be assimilated from the declarative perspective rather than from the constitutive one.

Indeed, assuming that the recognition process is a fundamental part of the identity formation process renders the concession of social recognition an essential part of the process of identity formation.

2.6 – Implications: identity drives force for action and identity affects international politics

All of these elements reinforce one another's effects; the two corollaries referring to elements characterizing identity and identity formation process do interact with each other by strengthening their (common) effect. The fact that identity is essential, is fundamental for one's existence, and is conceived as being formed through social interaction requires that actors, who are longing for their identity to be attributed to them, must socially interact to achieve their existential aim – being granted their identity. In other words, the desire for identity (to have an identity socially recognized and attributed) provokes in the identity-seeking actor⁷ the start of the *identity formation process* which – given that the identity formation process is

⁷ The 'identity-seeking actor' will also be referred to as 'the candidate'.

social and relational – includes (or even corresponds to) the *identity recognition process*.

Therefore, the implications of these assumptions and the related two corollaries, in the first case, entail that actors who want to obtain (to be conferred) their desired identity are moved to action – because identity is strictly related to existence. In fact, given the essential character of identity and therefore given that one must achieve an identity to come to (social) existence, to be able to have one's identity conferred, one must interact with others because – conversely – for this identity to be granted and conferred, its self-perceived identity must be socially confirmed by others. Otherwise, it will have the same meaning as a private language.

Thus, each actor longing for (social) existence will seek to fulfil the formation and confirmation of its identity. Given that 'seeking one's identity' requires interacting with the others, it follows that to arrive at having the identity confirmed requires the candidate to start a demand for identity recognition; by the group, a social act of recognition is also required for the process to be successfully accomplished.

Again, the desire and the existential need to have an officially recognized identity induce actors to take actions for their identity to be attributed to them; these factors induce the actors to seek recognition. Therefore, in the first case, the identity's character of *essentiality* implies that identity is a driving force for action.

Similarly, the *social-relational* character of identity formation has implications for the social interaction between the identity-seeker and the rest of the group that must recognize or misrecognize the desired identity. Indeed, the fact that identity formation is social and relational implies that this same character has effects on *the way in which identity affects international behaviour*. Indeed, how identity formation (identity seeking and identity recognition) occurs and the dynamics of the identity formation process affect international peace and conflict.

In other words, and to come full circle, once it is proved that matters of identity can move to action, it is also possible to claim that identity-related issues are good elements to consider when understanding international politics.

The following sections will be devoted to a discourse on these dynamics and of their effects on international politics, as presented in the IR recognition literature.

3 – The Recognition process

To understand how the identity formation process affects international politics, it is important to focus first on understanding how the dynamics of the identity formation process as presented for the case of the individual reflect at the international level.

As a second step, it is important to understand how these dynamics of identity formation affect international behaviours (and politics).

3.1 – Dynamics of the identity formation process: the recognition game

Given that identity is conceived as being social-relational, it follows that identity formation requires the participation of the others for the process to be completed. In other words, identity formation necessarily occurs in a social environment and corresponds with (and is accomplished by) the complementary process of recognition. Indeed, for the process of identity formation to be accomplished requires its social component – *the recognition process*. Identity seeking (the demand for identity) and identity recognition together form a sort of double-wave process that is 'complete' only in the presence of both components. When the identity-candidate seeks its identity, for this application to be completed, 'others' must confirm (in which case the outcome is successful) or disconfirm (in which case the outcome is unsuccessful) the self-advanced and required identity. The others recognize or misrecognize the identity seeker in its self-advanced identity; therefore, recognition completes the process of identity formation.

The recognition process corresponds to that component of social interaction that is necessary to accomplish the process of identity formation. Indeed, the process of identity formation resembles a 'theatrical process'. Similar to actors in the Roman theatre who wore a mask (or *persona*⁸) when appearing on stage in front of their

⁸ "Persona is reported (by Hobbes) as a Latin word originating from Roman theatre and refers to the "disguise, or outward appearance of a man, counterfeited on the Stage; and sometimes more particularly that part of it, which disguiseth the face, as a Mask or a Visard" ("Of Persons, authors, and Things Personated)," in Hobbes 1982, 217 – Reported in Ringmar, 2012, 7).

audiences, individuals seeking identity formation and standing in front of their audiences carry their identities as though they were theatre masks (Ringmar, 2012, 7).

"Like a Hobbesian actor, we carry our identities as masks before the audiences we address. If the audiences recognize us, we have an identity which we increasingly self-confidently, can go on to use, and the *persona* will be attached evermore securely to our face- however, if the audience boos and hisses—if we are denied recognition—we have a problem" (Ringmar, 2012, 7).

By focussing on this social moment of encounter between the identity seeker and his audience, it is possible to better understand the dynamics of the recognition process and the consequences they impact the identity-formation process and international politics.

To focus on this interaction moment, it is possible to refer to Ringmar's conceptualization of the so-called Recognition Game.

In his conceptualization, *recognition games* are those games that "do not typically concern what we can win or lose, but instead who or what we can be" – interaction games about identity (Ringmar, 2002, 120).

In 2002, Ringmar published the paper entitled "The Recognition Game, Soviet Russia Against the West", in which he presents the formalization of the interaction process. Perfectly in line with the assumptions of the strand of research of IR recognition studies, Ringmar begins with the intent of formulating an 'alternative identity-based model' that explains international 'questions of war and peace'. Indeed, in his 2002 publication, the author maintains a distance from those traditional perspectives that explain international politics based on interests rather than focussing on matters of identity. Ringmar builds on the sociological perspective of the self, which begins with the assumption according to which the self is not *a priori* given but is formed through social interaction. Thus, he arrives at a conclusion that "mutual recognition is a precondition for rational calculations to be possible in the first place" (Ringmar, 2002, 119).

The author, indeed, defines the 'Recognition Game' by strictly linking it to 'identity' issues and by challenging "Hobbes's atomistic concept of the self". Grounding instead on Hegel's conceptualization of the state of nature⁹, Ringmar advances the

⁹ The author himself refers to Hegel, 1807/1977: 111–19; Kojève, 1947/1980: 11–12.

idea that "the first game in which human beings engaged in the state of nature must have been a recognition game and not a prisoner's dilemma". Hence, "It could not have concerned the satisfaction of interests but must instead have concerned the recognition of identities" (Ringmar, 2002, 120).

The Hegelian concept of state of nature also refers to a context of conflict (in line with Hobbes), but the object of the contention is related to identity. Rather than concerning the 'distribution of utilities', it concerns – according to the author – "who should have the right to impose what description on whom"¹⁰.

Drawing from Hegel's recognition game, Ringmar frames an *alternative* interaction game¹¹ in which identity's mutual recognition is fundamental to arriving at a stable and peaceful outcome and in which its absence might lead to instability and war.

More specifically, the author traces the 'recognition game' as a game with two players (A and B), two possible strategies for each (recognize or non-recognize) and four possible outcomes. The four possible outcomes represent, if viewed from A's perspective, four possible stages of the recognition game, as shown in Figure 1 (Ringmar, 2002, 119-122).

Figure 1 – Ringmar's Recognition Game

A / B	Recognized	Non-recognized
Recognized	Peace (4)	'Master' (3)
Non-Recognized	'Slave' (2)	War (1)

Considering the game from A's perspective, the possible outcomes include a situation of "mutual non-recognition" that is described as an unstable outcome characterized by war – outcome n. 1 in Figure 1 (Ringmar, 2002, 121). The instability of this situation is

¹⁰ "This is how the master is separated from the slave, the superior being from the inferior" (Ringmar, 2002, 120).

¹¹ Therefore, to focus on a theory of 'how identities are created, established and maintained', and aiming at formalizing this theoretical framework into what he defined the "Recognition Game", the author maintains a distance from the other formalizations of interactions that are built on the assumption that state action is motivated by 'the quest for pay-offs'. He challenges the idea that it is the research for pay-offs that motivates players to take part in the game (Ringmar, 2002, 118). For instance, the author maintains a distance from the theoretical framework in line with both the classical prisoner dilemma game and "some more benign form of cooperation games" (Ringmar, 2002, 117).

deep and existential because it concerns the identities of both actors. In particular, both actors refuse to grant recognition of the other's identity. This extremely unstable situation could find an end "through the demise of one of the combatants" or "if one party decides to give in to the other's claim to superiority" (Ringmar, 2002, 121-122). Other unstable situations can emerge when the two players elect opposed strategies, for example, when one of them recognizes the other but without being recognized. Indeed, when A, recognizing B, "is not recognized under its own description", an unstable situation follows (outcome n. 2 in Figure 1). In this situation – according to the author – because A is not recognized in its self-advanced identity, it then becomes the 'inferior' part in the relationship with B – by recalling Hegel's language, the "slave". In this situation, a possible solution could be found in the fact that A has some 'incentive to improve' to regain its desired identity (Ringmar, 2002, 121-122).

"Consider first the situation in which one of the parties, A, is not recognized under its own description, while it has to recognize B. Here A is the inferior party whose claim to an identity goes unacknowledged. Following Hegel, however, A can improve its lot by developing itself and its skills. In sociological terms this is the situation of the self-conscious outsider or social upstart who tries to conform as closely as ever possible to the rules which govern life in a certain social setting. By conforming to the rules he makes it possible for others to recognize him as the kind of person to whom these rules apply" (Ringmar, 2002, 122).

Similarly, in parallel, when A is granted its own self-advanced identity but chooses not to recognize B in its proposed identity, then "B can be described in whatever terms A likes". From these conditions, a situation follows in which – according to the author – A is in a 'superior' position with respect to the misrecognized B. Again, in Hegelian terminology, A is the "master". In this situation (represented as outcome n. 3 in Figure 1), A, as a "superior party", can "determine, and enforce, the rules of the game" (Ringmar, 2002, 122). The author expands upon this specific outcome and arrives at formulating an "alternative, non-rationalistic theory of hegemonic decline" (Ringmar, 2002, 122). More specifically, by building on Hegel, the author outlines a situation in which the perceived advantage enjoyed by A does not last in the 'long run'. This occurs because, although A can "reap disproportionate benefits from its superiority" in the initial stages, "the recognition it is given will be useless, since it is provided by an

inferior. Lacking a true sign of respect, A will start to deteriorate" over time (for more details, see Ringmar, 2002, 121).

Finally, when starting from one of these two unstable situations, "The logic of the interaction between the players will sooner or later bring the game to an end. The players will either eliminate one another or grant one another recognition on their own preferred terms" (Ringmar, 2002, 122). Therefore, in the latter case (represented by outcome n. 4 in Figure 1), in which each player recognizes the other, the most stable and desirable outcome of the interaction-game has finally been reached. According to the author, the situation, which is described as a condition of peace and equality, represents a 'satisfactory outcome' to both actors. Indeed,

"It is an improvement for the previously inferior player who now finally manages to establish himself as an equal partner, but it is also an improvement for the previously superior player who now finally gets the respect he craves. A situation of mutual recognition is hence a stable outcome that need not be changed" (Ringmar, 2002, 122).

Therefore, the author can support the idea according to which international politics is not only about matters of interest but also about matters of identity. According to this logic, states not only pursue their 'national interest' but also – and before anything else – seek to establish identities for themselves" (Ringmar, 2002, 116). The author proves the important role played by 'identity' at the level of world politics by giving it a key role in his formalization of *recognition games*.

3.2 – Importance and meaning of recognition and misrecognition

When the recognition process confirms the self-advanced identity, the identity formation process is successfully accomplished, and the self-advanced identity is recognized as credible and legitimate; the identity-seeking actor is recognized and approved as *legitimate* in its identity (Suzuki, 2008). The process of identity formation is successfully accomplished because both its components are present.

In contrast, when the recognition process does not confirm the self-conceived identity of the identity-seeker actor – in other words, when the audience's external view does not correspond to or does not confirm the self-perception of the identity-seeking actor

– then a *disconnect* emerges between the anticipated identity and the externally assigned identity.

When the identity-seeking actor is denied recognition, the process of identity formation for the individual remains partial and incomplete. This situation represents a problematic situation for both the misrecognized actor and the society in general. Indeed, the misrecognized actor experiences a 'traumatic' situation; "To be denied recognition is a traumatic experience. We feel slighted, insulted, and brought low; our pride is injured, we have lost our status and our face¹²" (Ringmar, 2012, 7). Given the importance of having an identity and given the *fundamental* character of identity, misrecognition tears apart an essential and vital desire that concerns existence. In a similar situation, the misrecognized actor can undertake whatever action needed to obtain (gain or regain) its needed and essential identity (for social existence).

The above highlights the link between matters of identity and international state behaviour. States are moved to international action by identity-related factors; indeed, identity is so important that it moves states to action. This situation of instability opens the way to different options, but before focussing on the options, it is necessary to focus on the momentum of misrecognition as it is conceived and presented in the literature.

It is important to understand what it means to have recognition withheld. Two possible interpretations appear to be advanced by the IR literature; the interaction between the candidate and the audience is conceived on the one hand as *unidirectional* and on the other hand as *bidirectional* (reciprocated).

The unidirectional perspective assumes that the audience has no possibility of expressing itself beyond the capacity to accept or reject the identity advanced by the candidate. Indeed, from this perspective, the identity-seeking actor approaches the process of identity formation by presenting to the audience his self-conceived identity. The identity-seeking actor presents the others with his self-perceived identity, and (as conceived by the identity formation process) asks the audience to recognize it – to confer on him that same identity and to confirm the validity of his self-advanced identity. From this perspective, the audience can only accept and confirm the

¹² "This is the case for individuals but also for states. To the extent that people identify with their states—and they do—they will demand redress".

suggested identity, or, conversely, they can reject the identity but without interfering at all with its 'reformulation'. For example, the candidate's proposed identity is voted down with no additional comments that might convey the audience's opinion on the candidate. The candidate's identity is rejected. For a certain (non-specified) period, he experiences a sort of *vacuum of identity* because his own identity is refused and no other indication pertaining to his identity is given.

The literature appears to refer to this option in particular in the 2012 publication by Ringmar, in which he asserts,

"To be denied recognition is a traumatic experience. (...) Doing nothing is not an option: we cannot be without being described, and unless we are recognized, we have no social identity".

From this perspective, misrecognition creates a situation in which the misrecognized actor is described as being without a social identity; although one continues to exist, socially he still has no recognized or accepted image. The denial of recognition implies an absence of identity *in toto*. If not the advanced identity, then no other identity is momentarily assigned to the candidate, who suffers a complete deprivation of social identity.

Conversely, analysis from the *reciprocal* perspective on misrecognition understands and conceives the interaction between the candidate and the audience. This process of recognition (and misrecognition) is a bilateral interaction in which the audience's role is not limited to confirming or rejecting the candidate's self-advanced identity but rather also includes the capacity and possibility of expressing a further evaluation of the candidate that reproduces the external view that the audience has on the candidate. To give an example of this option, it is possible to imagine a situation in which the candidate presents himself in front of the audience declaring what he believes about himself (which according to himself is his own identity). If the audience shares that same idea about his identity, they can confirm the advanced idea. However, when the audience has a different perception and view of the candidate's identity, the audience can express its disagreement. That is, the candidate according to the audience is something different from the advanced identity (the advanced identity is rejected). He is not exactly what he believes he is; he might be less of this and more of that (the audience's perception of the candidate's identity is advanced).

From this perspective, the identity advanced by the candidate is *de facto* rejected, but the candidate is not left with a complete absence of identity. In this situation, although there is a disagreement – the mismatch between the identity advanced by the candidate and that observed by the audience – there is no *vacuum of identity*.

The candidate is not left with a complete absence of identity because memories from previous interactions can emerge as guidance on the situation of a mismatch or because the audience expresses its opinion on for example the candidate's identity.

The verdict of the audience is not limited to accepting or rejecting but instead is more articulated. The candidate must face the opinion and verdict of the audience and decide what to do with it (for example, whether to accept it, to adopt it, or to revise his initial proposal). I will go back to the available options later. However, what is relevant is now how to understand what Ringmar meant when talking about the 'denial of recognition'. It appears plausible (a point confirmed by the author himself in his previous publications) that the most prevalent option is rejection.

Indeed, by comparing the two options, it is possible to assert that the first is more a simplified version of the social recognition process. Only a supposed a-historical interaction, or the first interaction ever between a newcomer and its audience, could constitute a situation in which after a rejection of the advanced identity a complete absence of identity and description for the candidate can follow.

No social *vacuum of identity* could be possible in reality because there would be historical precedents of interaction between the candidate and the audience; their previous definitions of identities would be used as guidance in the case of rejection of the newly or finally advanced identity.

Therefore, it appears plausible to believe that 'denial of recognition' means *disagreement* (mismatch) on the advanced identity, which by the audience can be reported as an attempt to downplay the candidate's advanced identity. Given the competitive system, rarely would it occur in the international system that a state is spontaneously conferred a higher identity or status without its request.

Confirmations of this understanding also emerge from the literature itself. Indeed, Ringmar himself in his 1996 publication, when considering the unfortunate situation in which actors are not granted their self-advanced identity – that is, when they are not granted recognition – refers to this situation by wondering,

"What will happen, then, if our right to self-description is denied us? What are we going to do if we cannot establish our selves as those particular kinds of selves that our stories describe?" (Ringmar, 1996, 82).

Again, we encounter another confusing expression; indeed, if taken literally, it appears that the author is associating the withheld recognition with the deprivation, for the candidate, of the right to 'self-description'. However, if self-description refers to the first component in the process of identity formation, the internal, individual formation of the self-perceived and conceived identity, it would be difficult for an external actor to deprive the individual of this rather internal and personal process – unless the external actor takes away the individual's self-determination, that is, his internal ability to think. The right to self-description (self-formulation of identity) cannot be denied or taken away because self-description is an internal process over which an external audience has little or no power.

Indeed, as Ringmar himself specifies in his 2012 publication, when referring to the identity (and statehood in particular) of states:

"(...) statehood depends instead on recognition. A state that is not recognized may exist in itself but never for itself; that is, it has no status as a subject of international law and diplomacy. Again there is a close parallel here to individual human beings. A human being is surely a human being even if unrecognized by others, yet it is only through recognition that she becomes a person in Hobbes's sense, that is an actor with an identity" (Ringmar, 2012, 10).

Similarly, an actor that is not recognized in its self-advanced identity nonetheless continues to exist *in itself*.

Therefore, once it is established that the deprivation of the right to self-description has a more general meaning, we can understand this meaning when focussing on the second part of the sentence that explicitly clarifies that the problem is related to the individual being impeded from actualizing and putting into effect his own self-advanced identity.

This finding confirms that a situation in which the audience misrecognizes the candidate does not automatically deprive the candidate of his mere existence and therefore is related to the capacity to react or counter-react. In contrast, misrecognition opens the way to a situation of potential disagreement between the two sides: a *situation of instability* because the audience *disputes* the identity presented by

the candidate. Consequently, this 'dispute' requires (and opens the way to) further interaction to find a (possibly shared) solution.

Before focussing on this further interaction following misrecognition, in the next section we will focus on presenting the possible reasons that might induce social audiences to neglect recognition of candidates.

3.3 – Role and value of misrecognition: recognition requires misrecognition

Ringmar (2014) calls for more attention to be devoted to 'practices of non-recognition'. The author argues that based on the idea according to which next to recognition, non-recognition is not unrelated; it does not occur by chance but rather is necessary to maintain high the value of a distinction between members and non-members. There is a need to distinguish, exclude and demarcate.

According to the author, the practices of non-recognition deserve more attention; indeed, whether practices of recognition are used to 'affirm sameness', practices of non-recognition are complementary to the practices of recognition to demarcate the *inside* from the *outside* of the group. These practices exist because the process of demarcation cannot be limited to a process of becoming aware of similarities; it requires an aspect of distinction from 'the rest'. Indeed, "it is through exclusion, after all, that the exclusivity of a membership club is best maintained". When everyone is admitted, then the group does not exist anymore; its boundaries are inclusive to the point of losing their *raison d'être*.

"It was through practices of recognition, affirming sameness, and through practices of non-recognition, affirming difference, that international society came to constitute itself as such" (Ringmar, 2014, 447).

Indeed, whereas in other publications, the author referred to reasons one might not be granted recognition, justifying the denial based on an 'unsuitableness' of the candidate, he here refers to the need a group has to limit the extension of its membership 1) to adequate candidates and 2) to generally limit access because

"As Groucho Marx famously noted, once everyone is admitted on equal terms, membership loses its social prestige (Marx 1995, 321). In this alternative scenario, recognition takes place not between a master and a slave, but between a group of

masters who provide an identity for themselves by exaggerating the features that separate, and thereby distinguish, them from others. They recognize each other as superior because of their differences from everyone else" (Ringmar, 2014, 447).

This need for exclusion explains the fact that there is not necessarily a declarative logic in the denial of recognition to a candidate:

"There is no reason, for example, why the already established members of international society cannot refuse to admit non-members, no matter what they do to improve themselves. It is through exclusion, after all, that the exclusivity of a membership club is best maintained" (Ringmar, 2014, 447).

If, 'no matter what they do to improve themselves', the candidates can be refused recognition, this marks a distance from the 'declarative' view on the requisites for the assignment of recognition. Recognition is not necessarily assigned based on the presence (or absence) of certain requisites, but it is conferred based on a decision.

This outline of the situation is perfectly in line with what Suzuki referred to as the 'political character' of recognition: "the process of admitting a new member into the social grouping of 'legitimate great powers' is quite often a subjective and political process. Indeed, the historical record shows frequent instances of states which arguably had a better claim to membership being excluded, and vice versa" (See Bull; Buzan) – (Suzuki, 2008, 48).

Whether misrecognition is the result of an intentional choice consistent with a genuine intention to keep a high standard level of a certain group's membership or the result of a more malicious intention to commit a deliberate act of 'political' exclusion, no matter its origins, once it is issued, it opens the way to the abovementioned (potential situation of instability). The candidate and the audience have different opinions and ideas on the candidate's identity; how can this situation evolve?

This situation of potential instability opens for scholars and practitioners the need to understand the interaction between the candidate and the audience following misrecognition. In the next section, we will report two interpretative frameworks adopted by recognition studies to frame and outline the interaction between the candidate and the audience in a similar situation.

4 – Understanding international relations through the recognition process

The recognition process is a fundamental component in the process of identity formation. Without recognition, the process of identity formation is not complete and has no social effect. In its absence, the identity as self-conceived by the individual has the same meaning as a private language; it remains private and cannot reach the external reality. Misrecognition implies that the individual is trapped in his own internal perspective without being able to reach the external and social dimension.

Given the frustration emerging from this 'failure' related to the mismatch between the candidate's identity and the one assigned to him by the audience and given also the relevance of having been attributed an identity (a socially recognized one), options to react or potential remedies to this situation of potential instability open up. As mentioned above, a further interaction follows the situation of instability. The recognition studies literature has framed this interaction in two interpretative frameworks. The first outlines the situation more 'simplistically' by focussing exclusively on the options of recognition or misrecognition as adopted by the audience. The second interpretative framework focusses on a more detailed analysis of the possible reactions that the candidate can implement in response to the audience's decision on recognition or misrecognition.

4.1 – Interpretative framework 1: The International Politics of Recognition

Directly quoting Geis (et al.), "One of the main questions in recognition-related IR studies is thus whether and how the misrecognition of states or other collective actors promotes violent conflict and, vice versa, whether and how recognition fosters peaceful relations" (Geis et al., 2015, 13).

This quotation helps to understand directly the perspective from which situations of instability due to misrecognition are viewed. Indeed, similarly to the interaction formalized by Ringmar in the Recognition Game conceptualization, the main divide is located on the couplet of the two strategies available to actors: to recognize or to not-recognize. By examining the interaction from the candidate's point of view, a

situation in which recognition is conferred will accomplish the candidate's requests for identity formation and favour its positive and peaceful behaviour towards the others and the international society itself. Conversely, a situation in which the candidate is not granted its identity will make the candidate dissatisfied with the situation and can induce it to fight for its identity; thus, misrecognition is said to foster international conflict.

This perspective characterizes the strand of research that focusses on the 'international politics of recognition'. This perspective on studies is based on the idea according to which recognition fosters peaceful relations, whereas misrecognition fosters conflict and, always based on the above, arrives at formulating suggestions of normative policies – suggesting for example favouring recognition, disfavouring misrecognition, with the hope of favouring international peaceful relations.

However, this perspective maintains a focus on the society (the main actor) in which the candidate is the only object of all that occurs; if society grants recognition, it is able (it has the power) to foster peaceful reactions and relations. Conversely, if it withholds recognition, it is fostering conflict. In both cases, however, the decisive 'power' lies in the audience's hands; society has the power to impose which identity on whom and therefore to decide the development of international relations.

The next section will be devoted to a more detailed examination of the dynamics of misrecognition.

4.2 – Interpretative Framework 2: options for possible reactions to misrecognition

More articulated than the international politics of recognition framework, Ringmar and Shogo Suzuki discuss in more detail the options available to a state that is not recognized, that is, is not granted recognition of its self-advanced identity.

In *Identity, Interest and Action* (1996), Erik Ringmar tries to outline the picture of the 'possible course of action that opens to the candidate after the verdict of

misrecognition of his identity'. Ringmar schematizes these options into three possible ones.

Both the first and the second options view the candidate as accepting the audience's verdict on his identity. In both situations, the candidate accepts that the description of his identity as advanced by him might be 'wrong', or at least that the one advanced by the audience might be a better description. In these two situations, the options available to the candidate include the following: in the first case, he accepts and internalizes the 'description' advanced by his audience¹³. Similarly, in the second case, although accepting the verdict and description of the audience, the candidate focusses on 'rethinking' and reformulating his own identity and description to include those elements of his identity that were revealed during – and emerged from – the interaction with the audience¹⁴. Both options relate to a situation in which the candidate accepts the sentence of the audience concerning his identity and tries to align his image to the description (of him) given by the audience, works on himself and internalizes it, or rethinks his self-conceived identity. These options differ negligibly and can be overlapped into one.

The third option presented by the author portrays a situation in which the candidate rejects the audience's verdict *in toto*. The candidate indeed refuses the definition of his identity as formulated by the audience because he is convinced that his self-conceived description is better (correct or more realistic) or at least because he is convinced that the audience's description does not fit his identity.

In this situation, the fact that he rejects the external description advanced by the audience places in front of him the need to find a solution to the disagreement emerging from this interaction. This need is also strengthened by the fact that – as part of the assumptions underlying this perspective on studies – he, as anyone else, must have a public identity. The author reports that

"The third option, however, is to stand by our original story and to try to convince our audiences that it in fact does apply to us. Thus while the first two options

¹³ Directly quoting, "The first option we have already discussed: to accept the descriptions that others apply to us, to internalise them and to make them ours. Perhaps those others - our potential peers, colleagues or friends - were right about us after all, perhaps we overestimated our worth, our skills or our looks" (Ringmar, 1996, 82).

¹⁴ Directly quoting, "rethink our descriptions of our selves and come up with a new story that better corresponds to the facts as they have been revealed" (Ringmar, 1996, 82).

mean that we accept the definitions forced upon us by others, the third option means that we force our own definition upon someone else" (Ringmar, 1996, 82).

When 'standing by his original story', the candidate chooses disagreement with the audience's verdict (as reported above). Therefore, the solution to this mismatch comes in the form of an imposition of the candidate's self-conceived identity on the audience. The effort to impose his self-conceived identity can take different forms, as the author indeed continues:

"There are of course many ways in which to convince people that they are wrong about us. We may try to plead with them perhaps, yet mere words are probably not going to get us very far. What we typically do instead is *to act*; only through *action* can we provide the kind of final, decisive, evidence that *proves* the others wrong. The action will be there for everyone to see and as such it will be an irrefutable manifestation of our character; our action will encroach upon our detractors and force them to reconsider their views" (Ringmar, 1996, 82).

The options that emerge from this writing are to plead or to take action; although both are minimally outlined¹⁵, and the pleading option is not further elaborated, the two options presented in opposition provide an idea of the framework.

This first outline helps to focus attention on a first distinctive element with respect to which it is possible to classify the options. Indeed, the options can be separated into two main branches concerning the candidate's reaction to misrecognition. On the one hand, the misrecognized actor accepts the audience's (divergent) verdict and description about his identity and aligns himself with it. On the other hand, he rejects the audience's different opinion of him and commits to trying to impose his self-advanced definition on the audience.

To accept or to reject the verdict could also be expressed as 'agreeing' or 'disagreeing' with the verdict. The candidate accepts the verdict in the sense that he agrees with it and decides to peacefully align to its content. Conversely, the candidate rejects the audience's description in the sense that he disagrees with that verdict (that diverges from his own idea of himself).

¹⁵ It is not exactly clear what the author means when referring to action. The word could refer to 'violent action' as in the case study addressed in this publication (Sweden joining the Thirty Years War with the aim of establishing its identity as a 'modern European country'). Alternatively, it could refer in general to the abovementioned need of the constructivist scholars to articulate an alternative explanation of action focussed on identity-related issues; the need to have an identity assigned (the proper one) induces actors to 'action'.

A similar outline (with a few modifications) is presented by the same author in his 2012 publication, in which he again outlines three possible options. In this case, the first option nonetheless concerns a situation in which the candidate accepts the audience's verdict on his identity and the need to live with it. According to the author,

"When faced with a denial of recognition, (...). The most obvious alternative is to give up; to accept that others are right about us and that we cannot be the person we thought we were. Our stories, clearly, do not apply to someone such as ourselves. This is the situation a state faces in the wake of a loss in a war or some similar calamity. As a result it is, for example, no longer possible to lay claim to a status as a "super", "great", or a "colonial" power. Instead the state in question has to come up with an alternative self-description and re-branding itself as something else. Such a reconsideration of one's role is often a long and painful exercise, and there is of course no guarantee that the new identity we come up with will be recognized either" (Ringmar, 2012, 8).

Leaving aside the details of the example advanced by the author, this first option recalls the first two options described in the 1996 publication. Indeed, it appears that the 'give up and live with it' option incorporates both of the first two options as presented in 1996; the author accepts the audience's verdict, he gives up and accepts that the others are right about him, and he re-brands his image on the basis of the elements emerging from the audience's description. Somehow, to re-frame his identity according to the audience's verdict, he must also internalize that description and adapt to it. Therefore, in this first option, the candidate ultimately accepts the need to agree with the audience's description of him and aligns with it.

Although the first option recalls the first two options as presented by the author in 1996, the second option presented in 2012 introduces instead a new element for the case in which the candidate accepts the verdict of the audience. Indeed, in addition to accepting the verdict of the audience, the candidate will also commit to trying to improve his identity. Directly quoting Ringmar, who describes the second option as follows,

"The second option is to accept the verdict of the audience but to stick to our stories and insist that we can live up to the self-description they contain. This means embarking on a program of self-reformation. The offended state will have to do whatever it takes to be accepted on its preferred terms—develop itself economically, adopt the required political institutions, improve its educational system, and so on. Once this task is completed, the ugly duckling can go back to

its detractors as a beautiful swan, hoping to finally be recognized as the state it always presumed to be" (Ringmar, 2012, 8).

Ringmar introduces this option, stating that it pertains to the group of options in which the candidate accepts the audience's verdict ("The second option is to *accept* the verdict of the audience"). However, some confusion is created by the subordinate clause of this phrase: "but to stick to our stories and insist that we can live up to the self-description they contain". The candidate accepts the verdict that contains a description of him that is different from his own but nonetheless 'sticks to his own description'. Indeed, two possible interpretations could be given to the fact that the candidate insists that he can live up to the self-description as presented by him but also accepts the audience's verdict.

In one of the possible interpretations, these two elements are contradictory. Indeed, differently from those cases in which the verdict is accepted and in which the candidate commits to internalize the external description and/or to align with it, in this case, the candidate is said to accept the verdict but not abandon his own description, insisting instead on living up to his self-description.

Therefore, 'to stick to our decision' from this perspective can mean that, although respecting the audience's verdict, the candidate nevertheless maintains a sort of self-confidence about his self-advanced description. Hence, the candidate insists *with* the audience that his own description is the right one and that, although he respects the audience's verdict (he accepts it), he can nonetheless prove to the audience that they are wrong about him. Indeed, from this perspective, the audience made a mistaken evaluation because he is actually able to 'live up' to the identity he attributed to himself, and he insists on doing so (sticks to it) to convince the others that they are wrong.

However, this interpretation is not confirmed by the second part of the outline of this situation; indeed, Ringmar continues his description of the second option available to the misrecognized candidate by referring to a process of 'self-reformation' that brings the ugly duckling to transform himself into the beautiful swan. Therefore, it emerges that the candidate's insistence is not only addressing the audience (to prove them wrong) but is also addressing himself. Indeed, once the candidate presents himself with the identity of the beautiful swan and the audience turns down this identity (they neglect that he actually has this identity), then – from this perspective – he accepts

this verdict; he accepts that he is not yet a swan and decides to work to achieve that (desired) identity.

This latter interpretation appears to be in line with the situation as described by the author. According to Ringmar, the second option available to the misrecognized candidate concerns a situation in which the candidate is said by the audience not to correspond to the self-advanced identity. The candidate accepts that the audience is right on this point, but, because he desires to reach his self-advanced identity – to be able to respect it and to have it (publicly) assigned – he nevertheless makes an effort himself to achieve it; he undertakes a process of self-reformation.

When selecting this option from the 'agree/disagree' choice, according to the author, the candidate agrees with the audience that he is not (or is not yet) a swan; he accepts this verdict. However, a new element is introduced in this option because, although agreeing on his mismatch with the self-advanced identity, the candidate does not turn towards aligning with the audience's description. Indeed, instead of re-phrasing his own description in line with the audience's verdict, he works on himself to fulfil his own idea of himself and be publicly recognized as such; he commits to reaching his desired identity (the self-advanced one).

A new element is introduced by this second option, which concerns 'change'; it also refers to a particular modality to achieve this change. Indeed, change refers to an attempt by the candidate to change his own situation (his own identity) by changing himself while being respectful of the audience's opinion.

The third option presented in the 2012 publication leans towards options in which the candidate rejects the audience's verdict because he disagrees with the audience's description of his identity. As described by the author,

"A third option is to stand by our stories without reform and instead to fight for the self-descriptions they contain. The task here is to convince our detractors that they are mistaken about us and to force them to change their minds. Violence may work badly in interpersonal relations, since you cannot force someone to respect or love you. In international relations, however, the use of force has greater use and similar threats are often successful. A state that is not taken seriously can go to war to prove its importance, and for a group fighting for its "national independence," violence is often the only available option" (Ringmar, 2012, 8).

What the candidate in this instance rejects is the duty to adapt to (and align with) the audience's description of him. He disagrees with the *non-matching* description given by

the audience [for reasons that can vary] and is firmly convinced that his own identity is 'correct' and that he can already live up to it. As in the third option of the 1996 publication, he decides to 'stand by his own identity'.

In this situation, the candidate is convinced that the self-advanced identity applies to him, and for this reason he is not available to make any adjustment or any reform; he is instead ready to directly confront the audience and to 'fight' (to struggle) for his identity to be recognized also externally. The aim of this struggle is to convince the audience that they are wrong, to induce them to change their minds about him and to convince them to accept the candidate in his self-advanced identity (accept that the candidate corresponds to the self-advanced identity).

In Ringmar's own words, "The task here is to convince our detractors that they are mistaken about us and to force them to change their minds" (Ringmar, 2012, 8).

Again, at this point, as in the third option of the 1996 publication, from this non-matching situation a new issue emerges – how does he prove the audience wrong? How does he convince them to change their minds?

The terminology used by the author to refer to this situation provides a clear insight into his orientation on the point; indeed, there is no coincidence in the words reported thereafter: "Violence may work badly in interpersonal relations, since you cannot force someone to respect or love you. In international relations, however, the use of force has greater use and similar threats are often successful" (Ringmar, 2012, 8).

It appears, therefore, that in his 2012 publication, Erik Ringmar conceives this third option as one in which the candidate fights, (violently) conflicting with the audience to impose his originally self-advanced identity.

It is possible to reunite all of these options into a single table (Figure 2) divided along two main branches according to acceptance (A) or rejection (B) of the audience's verdict.

Figure 2: Possible options in case of misrecognition

A) Candidate accepting the audience's verdict		B) Candidate rejecting the audience's verdict	
[A] Accepting audience's verdict		[B] Rejecting audience's verdict	
(1) Give up	(2) Self-improve	(3) Plead	(4) Fight

Moreover, another interesting description – that might give a further description and explanation of option 3 'to plead' the audience (as conceived by Ringmar, 1996) – should be included here. It is developed by Shogo Suzuki (2008). By building on the interaction game formalized by Ringmar in 2002, he outlines, in his own publication of 2008, the description of a situation that can directly contribute to better articulate the 'plead' option of Figure 2 (option 3) or at least could introduce another relevant option to the current outline.

In his 2008 publication, Suzuki, beginning with the category of 'legitimate great power'¹⁶, develops and advances the category of 'frustrated great power'. Briefly, a 'legitimate great power' is a power that is legitimately recognized in its great power status and identity. It is granted its self-perceived identity (namely, the identity of a great power) and is treated as such; indeed, it is "recognized by others to have, and conceived by their own leaders and peoples to have, certain special rights and duties" (Suzuki, 2008, 47 – quoting Bull, 1995, 196).

A 'legitimate great power' is 'accepted' as such when the following two conditions occur:

"First, the newcomer's recognition as a member of this exclusive social grouping takes place when it is treated as a social equal by the existing members. Second, the new member needs to be accorded the same constitutional privileges of other 'legitimate great powers'" (Suzuki, 2008, 47-48).

In contrast to this situation in which the candidate is granted the recognition of its self-perceived identity, there is the situation in which recognition of the candidate's self-advanced identity is withheld¹⁷. It is in this latter case that the category of 'frustrated great power' proves its relevance; indeed, a frustrated great power is a power that is not recognized in its own identity. According to the author,

"(...) 'frustrated great powers' (...) have two characteristics. First, they believe they have been refused social equality with other 'legitimate great powers' in the course of their interactions with their peers. Second, 'frustrated great powers' are states that are not given the privileges associated with 'legitimate great power status', and

¹⁶ The author develops the definition of 'legitimate great powers' by building on Garry Simpson's definition of 'legalised hegemony'. See Suzuki, 2008, 47, and Simpson 2004, 68.

¹⁷ The author advances three possible factors that interfere with the process of recognition. See p. 48.

perceive a mismatch between their own expectations and the actual 'constitutional privileges' they are (or are not) accorded" (Suzuki, 2008, 49).

Once we have clarified that 'frustrated great powers' are those powers that are frustrated in their identity ambitions because they have been misrecognized and by leaving aside the specific elements characterizing the 'club' of great powers and great power status, we can move to a second observation.

Suzuki thus founds and builds the main contribution of his article; a *frustrated* power that suffers misrecognition can commit to "persuading and convincing its peers that it possesses the necessary attributes to be recognised as such" (Suzuki, 2008, 50).

How the author outlines this specific option becomes relevant to the current research. Indeed, he maintains that this specific effort of persuasion 'can often take the form of a *recognition game*'. Directly quoting,

In the context of 'legitimate great power' status, a 'frustrated great power' can persuade its peers that it should be accorded this position by following two steps. First, as 'a state is defined as a great power to the extent that it conforms to the social discourse that defines great power status at any particular time',⁽¹⁸⁾ it needs to identify the collective social norms and rules which govern 'legitimate great power' identity. Second, the 'frustrated great power' must then persuade its peers that it is worthy of this status. This often takes the form of a 'recognition game'. As Ringmar notes:

this is the situation of the self-conscious outsider or social upstart who tries to conform as closely as ever possible to the rules which govern life in a certain social setting. By conforming to the rules he makes it possible for others to recognize him as the kind of person to whom these rules apply" (Suzuki, 2008, 50 – quoting Ringmar, 2002, 121-122).

Suzuki makes a particular use of the expression 'recognition game' that refers to neither the complex game of interactions concerning the identity-formation process nor the formalized interaction of the recognition process as advanced by Ringmar. Instead, it is used as a synonym of the 'process of persuasion' that the candidate might undertake. It therefore refers to one of the options available to the candidate.

Again, while overlooking this specification, what is important in this section is how the author outlines this option. In reaction to a situation in which the candidate is

¹⁸ The author refers to Hobson, Sharman, 2005, 87.

misrecognized in his own identity, he can commit himself to 'persuading and convincing' the audience of his *suitability* for the self-conceived identity by 'conforming – *as closely as ever possible* – to the norms and rules which govern the legitimate great power identity'¹⁹.

This is a situation in which the candidate will commit itself to following the socially accepted rules; similar to the 'self-improve' option, it will follow a pro-social (*society-friendly*) path on which it will attempt to convince the audience of its suitability by following social rules. However, in this situation – and here is the relevant distinction – dissimilarly from the 'self-improve' option, the candidate disagrees with the audience's verdict. Indeed, whether or not in the 'self-improve' option the candidate recognizes that it is not yet ready and decides to work to achieve its aimed identity, in this specific situation, the candidate is describing having a clear idea of its identity. Indeed, it is said to 'believe that it is being refused a socially equal treatment' and therefore perceives a mismatch between its expectations (based on its own concept of its identity) and how it is actually treated²⁰.

It is the perception of this *mismatch*, this being aware of the existing gap between how it feels and how it is treated, that locates this option under the branch of options in which the candidate disagrees with the audience's verdict²¹.

Therefore, the new element brought in by this outline is the concept of an option in which, although disagreeing with the audience's verdict, the candidate nevertheless exerts efforts to convince them not by taking action and using violence but by 'following the rules'.

¹⁹ Although not highlighted by the author, a distinction must be specified between Suzuki and Ringmar when they refer to the 'rules and norms to be adopted as closely as possible'. Indeed, Ringmar's quotation reported by Suzuki refers to "rules which govern life in a certain social setting", whereas Suzuki is referring to "the collective social norms and rules which govern 'legitimate great power' *identity*" (emphasis added).

²⁰ The element of 'frustration' can be viewed, in one case, as a manifestation of the perception of the mismatch. However, in a more 'serious situation', the element of frustration can be symptomatic of the constant frustration of the attempt to be recognized – what Suzuki described as follows: "(...) for some states fulfilling the criteria needed for entry can seem like chasing a floating target, and this only adds to their sense of annoyance" (Suzuki, 2008, 49).

²¹ Similar and helpful is the concept of 'status inconsistency' used by scholars to identify the relationship between 'structural inequalities in international politics' and conflict (Volgy, Mayhall, 1995, 68). Status inconsistency is defined as a situation "when a strong incongruence exists between a certain level of achievement and the recognition accorded to that achievement" (Volgy, Mayhall, 1995, 68). We may borrow this expression to refer to the aftermath of the misrecognition by the audience and rejection of the misrecognizing verdict by the candidate. Indeed, in such a situation, the candidate perceives an inconsistency between its self-perceived identity and that which the public actually ascribes to him.

Finally, I refer also to Larson and Alexei Shevchenko (2010) who, by drawing on Social Identity Theory, conceived three possible strategies of 'identity management'. The two authors identify three possible "identity management strategies", namely social mobility, social competition and social creativity (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 67).

The first aims at "joining the elite club". It consists of adopting and replicating the rules of the group (Ivi, 71), and it can be performed when there are "permeable boundaries" to access the elite group. The second option, social competition, instead occurs when there are "impermeable boundaries" and the 'status hierarchy is perceived as illegitimate'. In this case, the state adopting this strategy will attempt to 'challenge the hierarchy in its area of superiority' (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 72). By contrast, the third option, social creativity, occurs in a situation in which the status hierarchy is considered 'legitimate' and 'stable'; therefore, the state, instead of directly competing with the hegemon, tries 'to achieve prominence outside the arena of geopolitical competition' (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 67, 73).

Before moving to a closer analysis of options 3 and 4, I will focus in the next section on analysing some of the characteristics of analytical frameworks 1 and 2.

4.3 – Characteristics of the interpretative frameworks

As mentioned above, the two interpretative frameworks are not antithetical; they outline the same situation by focussing on different levels. The first interpretative framework focusses indeed on the options available to the audience to recognize or misrecognize the candidate and relates this choice to possible outcomes at the level of international politics (recognition fosters peaceful cooperation, whereas misrecognition fosters conflict). Similarly, but in a more articulated fashion, the second framework of analysis focusses instead on the possible options available to the candidate in reaction to recognition or misrecognition. This second framework can explain the relationships between recognition and peaceful cooperation on the one hand and misrecognition and conflict on the other hand, and can outline and show the in-between processes that might lead to those results.

4.3.1 – Division line: recognition–misrecognition or acceptance–rejection

According to the first interpretative framework, it appears that the problem of instability is automatically caused by the withholding of recognition. Indeed, as reported above, the main division is usually located in the distinction between recognition and misrecognition. Perfectly in line with this, the predictions of the 'international politics of recognition' are based on the following couplet: recognition fosters peaceful relations, whereas misrecognition fosters conflictual relations.

However, as has emerged in the previous section – with a more in-depth observation of the options available to the candidate in response to recognition or misrecognition when interacting with the audience – the real instability problem is not originated by the recognized-misrecognized binomial but is instead related to the candidate's reaction to being recognized (or misrecognized). According to a second interpretative framework that focusses more on the role of the candidate in the interaction, instability is certainly more probable under misrecognition (instead of recognition). However, in this situation, the balance is tipped by the candidate's reaction to this situation. The real problem does not emerge when the candidate is misrecognized but when the misrecognized candidate disagrees with the audience's verdict and decides to reject it, in which case he might decide to opt for violent means to impose his own identity.

The case in which the candidate agrees with and accepts the audience's verdict and the alternative case in which he rejects the verdict because he disagrees with it lead to different situations and different options within them. Indeed, in the former case, the available options are generally peaceful – the candidate accepts the verdict, internalizes it, and rebrands himself according to it (option 1), or in the more articulated case, he develops the ambition to achieve a higher status, but always *peacefully* (option 2). However, in the latter situation, the case in which the candidate disagrees with the audience, a more critical (potentially unstable) situation opens up. The real potential for instability is located here; the candidate can choose to pursue his recognition by peaceful and compliant means (option 3) or by aggressive and violent means (option 4).

Therefore, the real *critical juncture* in which a situation might turn towards peaceful cooperation or towards conflictual relations lies in the alternative between

options 3 and 4, when the candidate must choose whether to opt for complying behaviours or to adopt instead conflictual behaviours. This critical moment will be the focus of further analyses in the upcoming sections.

4.3.2 – Options are alternative and exchangeable

A common feature to both of the interpretative frameworks is that both explanations are based on a shared perspective that views options as alternatives to one another.

In the case of the 'International Politics of Recognition' perspective, options (to recognize or to misrecognize) are presented as opposed alternatives; the audience must decide on one of the two and cannot mix them. In line with this, reactions and consequences to this choice are also opposed alternatives. Cooperative behaviours and, accordingly, peaceful relations follow the politics of recognition. Conversely, aggressive behaviours and conflictual relations follow the politics of misrecognition.

Similarly, although addressed in more detail, when focussing on the perspective of the candidate, the available options generate opposite alternatives. Specifically, once confronted with the misrecognition by the audience, the candidate must choose what to do. The options available to it are 'alternatives' to one another; indeed, the candidate can choose whether to accept the verdict or reject it – whether to agree or disagree with the audience. Once it decides to accept the verdict, it can choose whether to 'give up' – accept and live up to the audience's description (option 1 in figure 2) – or to commit to a self-improving process that requires effort and energies (option 2 in figure 2). These two options are alternatives, although they derive from the same initial situation (the candidate accepting the audience's verdict), and both imply cooperative relationships.

However, the fact that the options are alternatives is even more evident in the case in which the candidate decides to reject the audience's verdict. Indeed, in this case more than the previous ones, the candidate will be confronting *polar* options; to convince the audience of his *suitability* to his own identity, it must choose whether to do so by complying (option 3 in figure 2) or fighting (option 4 in figure 2). More than in the previous case, these two options lie on opposite sides and require different policies to be implemented. Indeed, going to war or subjecting itself to the (formal and/or

informal) normative structure of the group, require and imply different efforts (we will return later to this point).

However, although these options are presented as alternatives, they are also described as 'incremental' or interchangeable, meaning that the candidate can decide to move from one choice to the other. To give some non-exhaustive examples, the candidate can indeed decide to accept the verdict of the audience and choose option 1 or option 2 and might decide to move its strategy from one choice to the other. That is, it might begin by trying to achieve a certain status (option 2) and then decide to downsize its ambitions by accepting the verdict of the audience and conforming to it (option 1), and vice versa. Similarly, it can decide to reject the audience's verdict and begin trying to convince the audience of his validity (option 3) but move to option 4 (conflictual relations), or decide to give up and conform to the verdict of the audience (option 1 or 2). This interchanging of options can proceed in an increasing or decreasing direction – from 'give up and live with it' (option 1), to 'fighting' (option 4) – or vice versa from (option 4 to option 1). The choice could also follow no 'real order'; in other words, the candidate has these options at his disposal and for example can choose which one to pick, which one to begin with, and which others to continue with²². (Later, we will focus on why the candidate might opt for one choice or another.)

Similar features also characterize Larson and Shevchenko's (2010) concept of the three possible strategies of 'identity management'. Indeed, the three options – social mobility, social competition and social creativity – are also alternative options and are described in the following terms:

"they are ideal types indeed elements of each can be found in a particular country's foreign policy, nevertheless, the strategies have different goals and tactics (...) so that prevalence of one of the three, alters a state's foreign policy" (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 75).

²² The reasons one may move from one to the other are interesting. This refers in particular to those cases of frustration (Suzuki, 2008; Wolf, 2014, 2008; Volgy, Michal, 1985) in which, by using the language of formal interaction, games can be assimilated into a repeated game of interaction in which the candidate is constantly confronted with misrecognition 'no matter what he does to improve himself' (option 2) or in which he convinces his audience of his suitability for a certain identity by complying and self-socializing to social (formal and informal) norms (option 3).

From this perspective, conceiving cooperation and competition as alternative strategies with different goals and tactics implies that not only strategies in themselves are alternatives but also the related aims and tactics are opposite alternatives (this element will be further developed in the next sections). Therefore, we once more face an alternative and opposed framework of cooperative and competitive behaviours. Indeed, in this case, 'adopting and replicating' rules – implementing a conforming behaviour (in line with option 3) – or challenging the status quo via conflictual competition and assertiveness (in line with option 4) are also alternative options that remain un-combined even in the third strategic option because it refers to competitive behaviours but only in dimensions other than the geopolitical arena.

4.4 – Mismatched misrecognition: the critical juncture of cooperative or competitive relations. Adopting complying or competitive strategies?

As mentioned in section 4.3.1, the *critical juncture* in which interaction between the candidate and the audience may turn towards relationships of peaceful cooperation or towards conflictual relationships occurs in the 'crossroad' between option 3 and option 4. This moment is when the candidate, who is *disagreeing* on the *misrecognition* received from the audience, must decide whether to commit to adopting peaceful, cooperative, complying behaviours (option 3) to convince the audience to change its mind or to pursue violent and conflictual means (option 4).

Because option 3 corresponds to the option formulated by Suzuki (2008) and is not clearly mentioned²³ by Ringmar (1996, 2002, 2012), who initially conceived the formulation of the social interaction for recognition, it might appear that option 3 is atypical or not in line with the framework of recognition studies.

Section 4.4.1, will focus on highlighting the rationale of this option, which proves that it is perfectly in line with the framework of recognition studies; thus, the aim is to highlight why candidates might decide to adopt this option. Afterwards, section 4.4.2

²³ Option 3 as formulated by Suzuki (2008) – in which the candidate complies with social rules – is similar to one of the two interpretations of option 2 as formulated by Ringmar, in which the candidate accepts the verdict but decides to self-improve to achieve its aimed identity. See section 4.2.

will focus on highlighting why candidates might choose to adopt competitive strategies in reaction to mismatched misrecognition.

4.4.1 – Rationale for adopting cooperative strategy (option 3) in reaction to mismatched misrecognition: recognition process is social-relational

The third option, as formulated by Suzuki, stipulates that results are highly important in the outline of the options available to the candidate. Thus, although it might appear an 'atypical' strategy to react to a situation of *misrecognition* and *mismatch*, it is nonetheless possible to highlight its *rationale* and its relationship with the assumptions of the entire strand of research.

Indeed, as mentioned in the previous section, the assumptions constituting the basis of this strand of research concern the idea that identity is *fundamental* and that it is *formed* through a *social* process. Identity is created, fundamental and relational.

In particular, by focussing on identity's relational character, it is possible to understand the *rationale* of this third option.

The outline of options available to the candidate in reaction to recognition or misrecognition, as conceived by Erik Ringmar (1996, 2012 – see section 4.2), considers the candidate able to decide whether to convince the audience to change its verdict by 'pleading' or by using force (Ringmar, 1996). However, with respect to these two options, the author himself reports that, whereas "mere words are probably not going to get us very far," the other possible option "is to act" – given that "only through *action* can we provide the kind of final, decisive, evidence that *proves* the others wrong" (Ringmar, 1996, 82).

Given this formulation, it can appear that in a situation of misrecognition (and disagreement), the candidate will opt for conflictual means to impose its identity on the audience and that this option is the most effective one.

However, the option described by Suzuki adds something more to the 'pleading' option and contends that in a situation of misrecognition and disagreement, it is still possible to develop peaceful relations. This occurs precisely because, given that the status is socially conferred, any actor in any situation will require final confirmation by society, and he must 'persuade' them. However, although persuasion can take different forms, that recognition is needed (perceived as fundamental) and is conceded by

society itself (through a social-relational interaction) that creates a sort of *reassuring guarantee*; to have the audience's recognition, one must 'conquer' it. One has a better chance of obtaining it by currying favour with – by appeasing – the audience. Indeed, because the final approval arrives from society, it makes no sense not to commit to appeasing it.

In contrast, the effort to be recognized without trying to appease the audience, or even worse, committing to fighting against it (to obtain social recognition) implies something similar to an attempt to become king that includes killing each and every potential subject. The risk is that this aggressive attempt irritates them and induces them to withhold recognition.

That final approval derives from others – the fact that an identity can be formed only through the social process of recognition – assigns to society (the audience) a sort of 'intrinsic power of coercion' that reflects in this *reassuring guarantee* confirmation that "the allure of attaining status within the dominant normative structures in international society appears to be surprisingly strong"²⁴ (Suzuki, 2008, 60).

That recognition is a social process (is socially conceded) guarantees that any attempt to obtain it should be socially based; therefore, it should be pursued within social boundaries.

4.4.2 – Reason for adopting a competitive strategy (option 4) in reaction to mismatched misrecognition: peer rejection

Given the basic assumptions previously reported – according to which identity is *important* to the point of 'moving to action', but it is also formed and confirmed through *social interaction*, which implies that whereas identity remains 'fundamental' (needed), obtaining one requires seeking it within social boundaries – it is expected that any actor seeking identity through the process of social recognition, even in a situation of *misrecognition* and *disagreement*, should still commit to pursuing its

²⁴ Perfectly in line with this point, the author concludes his paper by claiming, "[T]he findings of this article suggest that the 'productive power' of international society exerts a much more powerful influence on state behaviour than realists suggest, and deserves closer scrutiny. It is here where the study of 'recognition games' can be of particular utility" (Suzuki, 2008, 60).

recognition 'within the dominant normative structures in international society' – because society has the power to grant or withhold recognition.

Therefore, it can appear that option 3 (cooperative, complying strategy) is the most reasonable option; given that the recognition process requires the consensus of the audience, why should the candidate risk the success of this process by challenging and threatening the audience with a conflictual strategy?

Nevertheless, option 4 is also conceived as an option by recognition scholars. Therefore, how can candidates adopt conflictual strategies? When and why, according to the literature, do candidates opt for option 4?

To find an answer to these questions, we can return to the literature and in particular to Ringmar's formulations of the conflictual option.

A further analysis of the option described by Ringmar and of the case study presented by the author in his 1996 publication can help to better understand the reason for the decision of the candidate to resort to conflictual behaviours. In his publication, the author focusses in particular on explaining why Sweden undertook this same decision in 1630 by deciding to go to war against the armies of the Habsburg emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (Ringmar, 1996).

The final explanation can be found (in a summarized version) in the description that the author provides about the possible options available to the candidate (in reaction to misrecognition).

Ringmar²⁵ stipulates that an available option, in reaction to misrecognition, consists of standing 'by one's own story' and that this option can be pursued by trying to 'plead the audience'. However, when considering that (in some situations) "mere words are probably not going to get us very far," then in those situations, the candidate might opt for 'action'²⁶ to convince the audience that they are wrong about him.

Let us focus on the sentence according to which, during a recognition process, 'mere words may not get the candidate very far'. This description recalls the idea that social interaction aiming at a successful accomplishment of the recognition process might not work properly (by not taking the candidate very far). Therefore, based on this description, when the social recognition process *jams* (becomes stuck), when

²⁵ As reported in section 4.2.

²⁶ Action is meant as a synonym of violent action (see section 4.2) – Ringmar, 1996.

peaceful-complying options available to the candidate do not work properly, when they do not (and never will) take the actor to a successful accomplishment of the recognition process, then, in a similar situation, the candidate can and will resort to 'action' to impose its identity on the audience. In other words, under this concept of the recognition process, conflict is an option when cooperation does not (properly) work – that is, when it does not provide any solution.

Let us focus on the case of Sweden as presented by Ringmar. Erik Ringmar, in his 1996 publication, has as a primary intention to demonstrate the relevance of identity-related issues as explanatory factors for international interactions by taking the antithetical view that contraposes identity matters to matters of interest (see section 2). Indeed, this case study focusses on answering the question 'why did Sweden join the war in 1630?' The given answer refers to – and proves – the essential role played by *matters of identity*. Indeed, stated in few words, in 1630, "Swedes go to war in defence of their national identity" (Ringmar, 1996, 145).

Deliberately leaving aside the debate on the relevance of *identity* vs *interests* (see section 2), what is interesting in this section is the historical process that brought Sweden to decide to go to war to defend its national identity, instead of opting for other means. Let us focus on this choice.

First point: from what Ringmar reports, it clearly emerges that Sweden initially (and for quite some time) did attempt to 'play by the rules' (Ringmar, 1996). Indeed, the historical moment preceding the decision for war is described by the author as a "formative moment" for the international system overall and for Sweden in particular.

Formative moments are meant by the author as "periods when meanings are contested and fought over with the help of all sorts of rhetoric and propaganda"; moments of reinvention of symbols; and "times when new identities can be made and established" (Ringmar, 1996, 85-86). Again, formative moments are characterized by two 'paradoxical features': they are (1) moments of 'unprecedented freedom,' and (2) moments of 'conformism and rule-following' (Ringmar, 1996, 86).

In line with the above, the Renaissance – described by the authors as "a time of exceptional poetic creativity and a time of conventionalism and self-discipline" (Ringmar, 1996, 170) – can be considered a 'formative moment' for the entire system.

Indeed, the inclination towards 'conformism and rule following' (typical of formative moments) characterized the entire historical context at the internal or international level. Indeed, as the author reports,

"the very same people who took such pride in their powers of self-creation quickly and voluntarily subjected themselves to the coercive rules of *la courtoisie*. A parallel process of self-fashioning took place at the inter-state level, we said. (...) To this end various codes of conduct were developed in relations between states also, and those princes who told the most fancy stories about their countries also came to submit themselves to the demands of the new conventions. In the Renaissance two such main sets of rules emerged: the body of international law and the code which regulated diplomatic conduct"²⁷ (...)

Although not all princes actually paid attention to these rules, they were clearly important to those princes who sought to gain membership in inter-national society, and a state which was yet to be recognised as a legitimate actor was likely to be a particularly conscientious ruler-follower" (Ringmar, 1996, 170, 172)

Therefore, in this particular historical moment, Sweden proved herself to be conscious of the importance of following rules – given that the mechanism of the recognition process is characterized by and requires 'rule following'. Indeed, the author reports that

"This, at least, was the case of Sweden. King Gustav Adolf took a strong personal interest in matters of law and he was an avid reader of legal treaties. According to reports, he spent some time every day 'studying ancient and modern authorities on the subject', and especially 'the work of Grotius, and in particular his tractatus *De jure belli ac pacis*'. The king, we are told, 'always carried his Grotius with him'; he was said to rest his head on the book at night, to keep it in his saddle bag during the day, and a copy of the treatise was found in the royal tent after his death" (Ringmar, 1996, 172).

Second point: given these premises, it is not clear why Sweden had to abandon complying behaviours in favour of harsh conflict.

Again, the mechanism that emerges from the abovementioned descriptions is founded on (and perfectly replicates) the social-relationship assumptions of recognition

²⁷ See Ringmar 1996, 170 and following pages for a deeper description of the abovementioned new rules.

studies. Indeed, the identity formation process, as in this specific case study, requires and suggests 'playing by the rules' (Ringmar, 1996).

This confirms that *rules* have indeed a fundamental role; they are fundamental for the candidate as much as for the audience. Indeed, by focussing on the perspective of the audience, when the audience is facing a 'demand for recognition,' rules prove useful as benchmarks for orienting on the judgement and final decision. Rules are helpful to the audience's judgement: "In order to simplify these judgements a rule of some kind is very helpful"; indeed, rules are useful for both "the classification of actions" and for "the classification of the people who perform them" (Ringmar, 1996, 86).

Indeed, rules help to set a standard for actions to allow the audience "to draw conclusions regarding the person who performed it". Rules also (2) help in differentiating "the kind of behaviour that is considered 'wrong' from the kind of behaviour that is considered 'right' but also (...) identify the class of actors to whom the rule itself applies" (Ringmar, 1996, 86). In conclusion, on the basis of this 'paradoxical features', rules "can be relied on to determine who belongs to a certain group and who does not" (Ringmar, 1996, 86).

Therefore, given the important role that rules play in orienting the audience's judgement, it is clear that they are also important for the candidate:

"Social upstarts are likely to be very good rule-followers, not primarily because they fear punishment in accordance with the rule if they fail, but because they want to be identified as members of the group where a particular rule applies" (Ringmar, 1996, 86).

The above implies that "[f]or someone who aspires to be recognised by others it is of course crucial to learn how to play by these rules", because "[W]e must show those who are already well established and universally recognised that they have reasons to count us as one of their kind" (Ringmar, 1996, 86).

Therefore, given that it is clear that the mechanism of the recognition process (according to the recognition studies literature) requires the candidate to follow rules, and given that Sweden did follow rules until then, it remains unclear what went wrong with this process. When and why did the recognition process mechanism jam, causing Sweden to opt for war? Ringmar helps us find an answer; indeed, he reports that

"It would not be difficult to write the history of Sweden from the year 1521 to the year 1630 as a story of continuous insults, slights and humiliations directed against the country and its kings" (Ringmar, 1996, 178).

Therefore, despite all of the efforts undertaken by Sweden²⁸, "the foreign audiences remained difficult to impress". This result implied that when the lower point of this 'humiliation' was reached – "After the Lubeck affair, relations with the emperor entered a new phase (...) bridges had been burned" – Sweden turned to war (adopted option 4) to impose its identity on the international audience (Ringmar, 1996, 181, 184).

This decision to move from option 3 to option 4 was made and justified in terms of the need to react to misrecognition. Indeed, Ringmar reports that the king, although considering the reasons for the 'disrespect', finds that

"we have not shown ourselves as strong as other nations and our reputation has suffered as a result; we have been treated with disrespect by foreigners and exposed ourselves to all the whims and capriciousness of fortune. Our enemies will dominate and suppress us unless we act in a manly and resolute fashion" (Ringmar, 1996, 182).

Therefore, given this situation of misrecognition and disrespect, "the emperor's repeated humiliations required a more forceful response. Only through action could Gustav Adolf prove that he indeed was a legitimate actor on the world stage" (Ringmar, 1996, 186).

The outcome of this mismatch and disagreement was that "[i]n 1630 Gustav Adolf took his country to war in order to force the Austrians to grant the recognition they had failed to grant freely" (Ringmar, 1996, 186).

We can move to the *third point*, by highlighting how the reasons that actors move from option 3 to option 4 are now quite clear:

"recognition was denied under humiliating circumstances and that the Swedes acted - went to war - in order to demonstrate the validity of their self-description, to prove that their own descriptions of themselves did indeed apply to them" (Ringmar, 1996, 145).

²⁸ See Ringmar, 1996, 178-184 for more details on the efforts undertaken by Sweden to conform to the rules.

Certainly, as the author concludes in his analysis, this decision was made in defence of identity and under the influence of matters of identity²⁹. However, what is of more interest here is the fact that conflictual strategy is conceived as occurring *in reaction* to misrecognition and mismatch, and as '*secondary to*' (and *following*) the failure of the complying option.

Therefore, this analytical framework explains conflict (option 4) as the result of *peer rejection*³⁰. Nevertheless, the adoption of conflictual strategies due to peer rejection can have two interpretations. In one case (by borrowing from studies on cognitive theories of emotions), it is possible to focus on the fact that when that candidate is withheld with recognition from his peers, he will perceive frustration (humiliation and so on) and might instinctively react to such acts of disrespect by retaliating against the perpetrators. In the other case, this same situation can be interpreted by resorting to cost-benefit calculations and considering that, in the same situation, the candidate might rationally understand that the cooperative option is not working properly and that it will not gain him the successful accomplishment of recognition. Therefore, he will rationally choose conflictual means (option 4) as a better strategy and a means to finally achieve the desired recognition by imposing it on the audience³¹.

²⁹ Versus the relevance of rational interests, indeed the author wonders, "Why indeed would this poor, economically backward and sparsely populated country on Europe's northern fringe ever decide to wage war against the Habsburg Emperor in Vienna, the mightiest ruler on the continent?" – see Ringmar, 1996, 11.

³⁰ Meant as rejection from or misrecognition by peers. This concept is in line with the concept of 'frustrated powers' adopted by Suzuki (2008). Indeed, a frustrated power is a power from which is withheld its self-advanced identity. According to the author, "(...) 'frustrated great powers' (...) have two characteristics. First, they believe they have been refused social equality with other 'legitimate great powers' in the course of their interactions with their peers. Second, 'frustrated great powers' are states that are not given the privileges associated with 'legitimate great power status', and perceive a mismatch between their own expectations and the actual 'constitutional privileges' they are (or are not) accorded" (Suzuki, 2008, 49).

³¹ A third option could be drawn from the phrase, "we have not shown ourselves as strong as other nations and our reputation has suffered as a result" (Ringmar, 1996, 182). This third option corresponds to the role theory concept; see section 2.2.2/ii). It could be debated that Sweden did not go to war because the other (peaceful) options failed and no other option was available but because 'fighting' could be identified as a characteristic feature of the identity that Sweden was aiming at. In other words, if Sweden wanted to be granted statehood as were all of the other European powers, and if 'fighting' is a capability that all European states must have, then Sweden was not responding to the requirements until the moment it started implementing the characteristics typical of European states. Therefore, fighting is not related to 'somehow' entering the group; it is not a means to enter but rather a requirement to respond to – to adopt (see chapter 2, section 2.2.2 (ii)).

4.5 – Conclusion: alternativeness and incompatibility of behavioural options

To draw conclusions, two elements emerge from the previous sections: (1) the mechanism of the recognition process is described as a process that suggests and requires social conformity and complying behaviours³² such that, (2) when this process does not work properly, actors can turn towards conflictual behaviours.

³² Therefore, this option can be assimilated with the process of 'socialization': the candidate is required and suggested to socialize himself as much as possible, internalizing formal and informal rules of the group and the system. Socialization is indeed a process that is necessary for the recognition process to be positively accomplished. When the field of International Relations began incorporating the concept of socialization, the latter underwent a disjoint development (briefly summarized in the following). This disjunction appears to have persisted for a long time because in 2001, Kai Alderson still complained that IR scholars "use the metaphor of 'state socialization' in mutually incompatible ways". Indeed – he continues – "there is no consensus on what it is, who it affects, or how it operates" (Alderson, 2001, 416). The author also suggests the idea that scholars from this field embark "from very different starting point" and arrive at – according to him – "a bewildering variety of definitions" (Alderson, 2001, 416). However, notwithstanding these apparently different paths followed by socialization concept in IR, a common point to all of these paths is that socialization refers to adaptation to – and adoption of – formal or informal rules. This basic definition is in line with the social roots of the concept. Indeed, by returning to social studies, we might find a parsimonious (and clearer, less confused) concept of the socialization process.

Indeed, most of the concepts of the 'socialization process' are grounded in a Long and Hadden sociological conceptualization of the socialization process (Long, Hadden, 1985). The two authors give a definition of socialization that is framed by undertaking "the perspective of group members" (Long, Hadden, 1985, 45); socialization is indeed meant as the act of the group that is '*socializing*' (training/preparing) the candidates. Therefore, from this perspective, "the aims of socialization are to create persons who can sustain confidence that they meet the requisites of membership and to incorporate them into membership. Socialization consists of action taken toward those aims" (Long, Hadden, 1985, 45). Therefore, socialization corresponds to the set of actions of 'creation' and 'incorporation' undertaken by the members of the group towards the candidates; in this case, the members peruse the objective of 'creating' new members – therefore the aim is prosocial and non-competitive. Creating new members means preparing candidates that can positively demonstrate that they meet the requisites of the group (and that they can and should obtain membership).

It follows that the effort of 'creating new members' undertaken by the group is composed of two forms of action which the authors refer to as '*showing*' and '*shaping*' (Long, Hadden, 1985, 45). Both *showing* and *shaping* aim at bringing the candidates to the point of meeting the membership requirements, which are conceived as being of three types: *knowledge*, *competence* and *commitment*. Directly quoting the authors, "The conferral and continuation of membership in any group rests on the plausibility of three assumptions about the members' relation to these requisites: (1) that they know and understand the requisites; (2) that they are competent and skilled in their use and application; and (3) that they are committed to following them as guides for action. In most cases, members actually will possess the requisite knowledge, skill, and commitment, but strictly speaking, their possession is not the determining factor in becoming or remaining a member. Membership status itself is an attribution made on the basis of members' confidence that the novice in question possesses these qualities, whatever the case in fact. If novices can sustain members' confidence that they meet the requisites, they may slip in with less than supposedly required. If they cannot sustain such confidence, even those who meet or exceed the requisites may not be accepted by the group" (Long, Hadden, 1985, 43). Both 'showing' and 'shaping' combine with the three types of requisites. Indeed, by focussing on 'showing', this action of 'creation' (preparation of candidates to become members) consists of displaying the membership requirements. It can indeed combine with all requirements (of knowledge, competence and commitment). Indeed, with respect to 'showing' activity, the authors write, "For the knowledge requirement, members present their world to novices. To display skill and competence, members demonstrate how to enact and accomplish the requirements. Finally, to show what is entailed in commitment, members hold novices accountable to the stipulations of their social world" (Long, Hadden, 1985, 45).

Therefore, group members show to candidates both the list of *membership requirements* and how to *enact* and *implement* these requirements. With respect to the second action of the activity of 'creation' of new members,

Therefore, in this concept, the two strategies are alternatives or follow one another, and they are, and remain, different and alternative strategies.

A similar concept can also be found in the characteristics of the three possible strategies of identity management conceived by Larson and Shevchenko (2010). In particular, the passage from 'social mobility' and 'social competition' is related to the difficulty, or impossibility, for the actor to join the elite club because of 'impermeable boundaries'. This difficulty in smoothly adopting and replicating the rules of the group might induce the actor to compete against the group – given that the 'status hierarchy is perceived as illegitimate' (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 71-72).

Finally, given these premises, it is possible to highlight that recognition studies can grasp the manifestation of one strategy per time. This point will be further developed in the next chapter.

shaping is described as follows: “Socializing agents also work to foster conformity to group expectations among novices. This shaping activity consists of the application of sanctions, both positive (rewards) and negative (punishments), to novices' behavior” (Long, Hadden, 1985, 45).

Therefore, while members commit to preparing the candidates for membership (e.g., showing and shaping), candidates are required to commit to the socialization process as much as possible – and as best as possible – and to adapt as best they can to the rules and requirements displayed by the group as membership requirements. Therefore, a socialization process that harbours in itself the characteristics of an education process (see Danziger, 1972) also encompasses the main social-relational features of the recognition process as conceived by IR recognition studies.

Chapter 2

1 – Recognition process explaining international politics: strengths and weaknesses of this theoretical framework

IR scholars focussing on recognition studies refocussed attention on identity-related issues and the role of matters of identity in international politics.

The aim of this new strand of research developed within IR was to formulate an alternative explanation for international politics, and researchers contributing to the field actually reached this goal. Indeed, when focussing on matters of identity, IR recognition studies can explain both peaceful and conflictual relations.

Based on this ability to explain by considering the two interpretative frameworks previously reported, the International Politics of Recognition (framework 1) explains peaceful relations as a direct consequence of recognition (the more recognition, the more peaceful relations³³) and conflictual relations as a consequence of misrecognition (the more misrecognition, the more possibilities of increased conflict³⁴). However, the second framework – the one that outlines the range of options available to the candidate to react to recognition or misrecognition – can give a deeper explanation of the same relations highlighted by the first framework. In addition, the second framework reports a relationship between recognition and peaceful cooperation and one between misrecognition and conflictual cooperation, but it is also able to highlight a relationship between misrecognition and peaceful relations. Indeed, as reported above, misrecognition does not automatically, directly, imply conflict. Therefore, by adopting the more in-depth perspective given by the second interpretative framework, analysis from this perspective helps to focus attention on the presence or absence of the *match* between the audience's judgement (about the candidate) and the candidate's self-expectations. The second framework provides a more detailed view of the candidate's actions and reactions to situations of recognition or misrecognition, so that one can consider the role of the candidate from this perspective with respect to

³³ Because recognition fosters pro-social, cooperative behaviours by the candidate that has no resentment to resolve, this fosters peaceful relations.

³⁴ Because misrecognition fosters conflictual behaviours by the candidate that may develop disagreement with the audience's verdict and resentment.

the interaction process that role brings to (international) peaceful or to conflictual relations.

We can say that the second framework distinguishes between a *stable* and an *unstable* context. The *stable* context occurs when there is recognition by the audience or when there is misrecognition from the audience but it is accepted by the candidate, who agrees with the verdict. In this case, stability is due to the *match* between the audience's verdict and the candidate's ambitions. Conversely, an *unstable context* originates when misrecognition by the audience is accompanied by disagreement by the candidate – which implies a situation of *mismatch* between the candidate's expectations and the audience's verdict.

Thus, the second interpretative framework relates *contexts of stability* to an outcome of peaceful relations that include both a situation of recognition (in line with the prediction articulated by the first analytical framework) and situations in which the audience opts for misrecognition, provided the candidate's acceptance of the verdict follows this withholding of recognition.

With respect to instability contexts, the second interpretative framework predicts that they might lead to positive or negative behaviours according to how the candidate decides to convince its audience (through cooperative or conflictual behaviours) that he deserves a certain identity or status.

Peaceful relations or conflictual relations can follow this situation of instability. Both scenarios are explained by referring to the role of matters of identity. Indeed, peaceful relations are explained under option 3, the case in which the candidate, misrecognized by the audience concerning his self-conceived identity and, although disagreeing with this verdict, nevertheless decides to commit to demonstrating to the audience that it is worthy of his own identity by behaving in a socially compliant way by adapting and conforming to rules as much as possible (Suzuki, 2008; Ringmar, 2002).

Similarly, within the second interpretative framework, recognition studies can explain conflictual relations as a (possible) consequence of the *mismatch* emerging between the view (the verdict) of the audience on the one hand and the view of the candidate on the other hand and the decision of the candidate to pursue the confirmation of its own identity through violent, conflictual means.

We mentioned previously that one of the main elements reported as a reason for the choice between adoption of cooperative behaviours and competitive ones is related to

(perceived) 'peer rejection'. Indeed, when the candidate is continuously denied recognition, notwithstanding its efforts or commitment, this situation might create resentment in the candidate. However, the situation also induces the candidate to understand that the main strategy suggested from a recognition studies perspective (the one that follows and reflects the concept of socialization process) is not working and that the only available approach is to abandon the prosocial strategy and behaviour and to adopt and implement assertive and conflictual behaviours to force its identity on the audience.

1.1 – Correspondence between available options and international politics

The interpretative framework emerging from IR recognition studies meets its limits when considering that all of the possible options of interaction outlined by the second interpretative framework correspond to actual politics implementable by the candidate.

Indeed, by focussing in particular on options 3 and 4, the candidate that finds itself disagreeing with a verdict of *mismatch* (if the audience refuses it recognition) can – to convince the audience that it deserves that specific identity – choose between two possible alternatives: comply with the normative system (option 3) or go to war to fight against the audience and impose its identity (option 4). These two alternative options imply that politics and behaviours that are as much as different and alternative to one another, indeed complying with the normative system or going to war, imply antithetical strategies and politics difficult to reconcile.

Indeed, recognition studies, as outlined by the literature, predict that identity recognition is an aim that can be achieved through a complying path – which corresponds to option 3 – or through a violent and aggressive path – which corresponds to option 4. These two paths are characterized by opposed strategies. Indeed, if complying behaviour is required to positively and peacefully overcome the situation of misrecognition and mismatch, the candidate following option 3 must adopt a strategy that includes complying behaviours (instead of conflictual ones). However, given that conflictual and aggressive behaviours are indicative of option 4, actors

adopting this option must adopt a strategy that implements similar (conflictual) behaviours.

The above implies that option 3 is expected to be manifested through conforming behaviours, whereas option 4 is expected to be manifested through a standing that includes violent, conflictual, assertive, competitive and deviant behaviours.

Indeed, when a scholar observes complying behaviours, he will be able to ascribe them to option 3; he will deduce that that state has chosen to follow the prosocial and peaceful path. Although conflictual behaviours will be observed, the scholar will deduce that the actor is adopting (or is going to adopt) option 4 as a means to obtain identity recognition.

Therefore, from this specific perspective, complying behaviours are strictly related to option 3 (peaceful means to reach identity recognition), whereas aggressive, assertive behaviours are considered a manifestation of option 4.

This outline of the interpretative framework emerging from recognition studies (as developed to date) has implications for and limitations on the capacity of the framework itself to interpret and understand international politics.

Indeed, given that foreseeing the future remains an ambition but not a skill of IR scholars (Friedberg, 2005, 8-9; Jervis 1991), scholars can observe how states, or a specific state, for example move within the international arena, how they play and interact with the others and the system itself, what behaviours do they implement, what statements do they make, and what intentions do they declare.

It is only possible to observe and interpret these (observed) behaviours according to the question guiding the investigation. Moreover, when the aim is to understand through which path the candidate will attempt to have its identity recognized, recognition studies offer us a twofold option; if we observe complying behaviour we must be under option 3 (peaceful means and relations). However, if we observe conflictual behaviours, we must be under option 4 (corresponding to an intention or attempt to violently challenge and fight the audience).

Some conclusions can be drawn from this section:

1: deciding to obtain recognition by complying or by moving war requires and implies two alternative options and related politics.

2: from this perspective, according to the recognition literature, complying behaviours are related to the final outcome of peaceful relations. Similarly, from the opposite perspective, competitive, assertive, aggressive behaviours are related to the final outcome of conflictual relations.

3: cooperative, complying, pro-social behaviours can be interpreted as the manifestation of the complying strategy (option 3), and competitive, assertive, conflictual behaviours can be interpreted as the manifestation of the conflictual strategy (option 4).

When scholars or practitioners observe cooperative behaviour, they might presume that the candidate is adopting option 3; however, when they observe competitive behaviours, they can presume that the candidate is adopting option 4.

4: problems arise when scholars and practitioners observe (together, at the same time, within the same foreign policy) manifestations of both cooperative and competitive behaviours. In these situations, the theoretical frameworks emerging from recognition studies manifest their weakness; they are indeed unable to grasp the compresence of both manifestations.

1.2 – Puzzling compresence of cooperative and conflictual relations

Beginning with the conclusions drawn from the previous section and by returning to the strengths and weaknesses of this interpretative perspective, IR recognition studies can provide an alternative explanation of international relations and politics. Recognition studies can indeed explain both peaceful and conflictual relations; they can also explain why the candidate chooses one option or the other (see 'peer rejection').

Therefore, although IR recognition studies can explain peaceful relations, conflictual relations and the reasons for the passage from one to the other, this same ability of explanation also represents its main weakness. Indeed, this new strand of research can explain both peaceful and conflictual relations but only one per time; it can explain the presence of one or the other but cannot explain those more complex situations of international politics in which both peaceful and conflictual relations coexist.

Similarly, when examining from this explanatory perspective by focussing on foreign policies, recognition studies can explain the clear-cut politics of peaceful strategy or conflictual strategies, but they meet their limits when they must grasp a more articulated and composed foreign politics in which both strategies are present at the same time.

In other words, the limits and weaknesses of this interpretative framework emerge in the situation in which the candidate is adopting both cooperative and competitive behaviours at the same time. How can we understand and interpret this situation of a compresence of behaviours?

Being able to understand how to interpret properly the compresence of behaviours to avoid making any under- or over-evaluation mistakes is extremely important. Being too concessive or too tough with a status seeking (unsatisfied) candidate could be a fatal mistake for the entire system, or at least either approach might cause *avoidable* damages.

For example, when Shogo Suzuki introduces his study on China's attempt to pursue the recognition of its identity through a strategy of compliance (Suzuki, 2008), when listing positive arguments backing his theory, he also admits and reports 'negative behaviours' that contrast with this vision and that negatively weight the optimistic interpretation according to which China is behaving in conformance with the international (normative) system. As reported by the author,

"At a time when undemocratic regimes are increasingly labelled 'rogue states' and withheld recognition as legitimate members of a society defined by its 'democratic core', Beijing's human rights abuses within its own borders, its military build-up, and its reluctance to enforce democratic governance on behalf of international society makes China appear to be harbouring revisionist intentions. This can be seen from various 'China Threat' theses. The result – contrary to classical realists' predictions that a state's prestige will be enhanced by its growing military clout – is that China has increasingly come to resemble a 'frustrated great power', dogged and upset by deep suspicions that its fellow 'legitimate great powers' are 'unwilling to see an independent, powerful, prosperous China stand proudly in the East'.

This is not to suggest that Beijing is the sole dissident in the American-led 'legitimate great power club'. As French opposition to the war on Iraq demonstrates, 'legitimate great powers' certainly do have scope to disagree with the superpower. However, it is worth noting that France does not oppose the society's fundamental goals of democratisation and respect for human rights. The Chinese case is qualitatively different in that the PRC has often found itself in fundamental

opposition to the norms which denote legitimate membership in international society" (Suzuki, 2008, 51-52).

Once again, how can we understand and interpret similar situations? Can we rest peacefully in the hope that status-seeking states that perform conforming and complying behaviours next to competitive, assertive ones do not represent a threat to the system, or should we worry and adopt counter-measures to prevent potential threats?

In the next section, we will focus on presenting some possible attempts to face the compresence of behaviours that attempt to give an explanation that remains faithful to the recognition studies' framework. Although recognizing the presence of both behaviours, scholars thus attempt to provide explanations that focus on the manifestations typical of one of the two strategies but downplay or justify the presence of the other manifestations.

Therefore, rather than explaining the compresence of behaviours, they focus on explaining (in terms of matters of identity) the presence of competitive or cooperative strategies separately by considering one the main manifestation of intentions and the other an 'outlier' element, not valid to be included in the main explanation but that only requires justification in other terms.

2 – Possible (alternative) explanations of the compresence of cooperative and competitive behaviours

2.1 – Framing the compresence from an Optimistic or a Pessimistic perspective

Borrowing from Friedberg (2005) we can say that the recognition studies' framework can produce both an 'optimistic' and a 'pessimistic' interpretation of the same situation. It is here helpful to introduce and explain his interesting and helpful outline of the three main IR schools and their internal developments.

2.1.1 – Friedberg's outline: optimists and pessimists

When schematizing the theoretical development of the debate 'over the future of US-China relations', Aaron Friedberg, in his 2005 publication, begins with reporting that the IR 'paradigmatic clashes' are still enduring in the IR field and that they are characterizing its development to the point that most analysts studying US-China relations "deploy arguments that derive from one or the other of the three main camps in contemporary international relations theorizing: liberalism, realism, and constructivism" (Friedberg, 2005, 9). The author moves then to introduce an interesting and useful finding; he highlights the fact that even between the same 'school' of thought, although scholars share the same 'basic analytical premises', they can nonetheless arrive at opposed conclusions. Indeed, with respect to US-China relations, the author asserts, "[T]hose whose basic analytical premises place them in one of these broad schools of thoughts do not necessarily have similar views regarding the future of US-China relations" (Friedberg, 2005, 9-10). This implies that "Each of the three theoretical schools, in sum, has two variants, one of which is essentially optimistic about the future of US-China relations, the other distinctly pessimistic" (Friedberg, 2005, 10). Indeed, still referring to US-China relations,

"On this issue, it is possible to identify liberals who expect confrontation and conflict, realists who believe that the relationship will basically be stable and peaceful, and constructivists who think that events could go either way (Friedberg, 2005, 10).

With specific consideration of the constructivist perspective, he adds,

"Although scholars who fall into this broad category have tended to be optimistic about U.S.-China relations (and about East Asian international politics more generally), the perceptual and ideational factors they emphasize could just as easily be invoked to arrive at considerably gloomier conclusions, a fact that some self-avowed constructivists have been at pains to point out" (Friedberg, 2005, 10).

Therefore, with specific consideration of US-China relations, it is possible to understand that those same elements (the same causal forces and causal mechanisms) that allowed analysis from the mainstream constructivists' perspective to favour the optimistic conclusions also allowed analysis from the other constructivist perspective to arrive at pessimistic conclusions on future US-China relations. In other words, whereas analysis from the optimistic constructivist perspective perceives the virtuous circle and reassuring guarantee produced by (international) social interaction, pessimist constructivists fear the negative effects of social interaction. This perspective does consider that social interaction can reinforce the dangerous loop of mutual suspicion and insecurity.

Therefore, analysis from the mainstream optimistic constructivist perspective, according to which 'social interaction' can self-strengthen the system because it allows 'widely held beliefs' to be shared and to evolve (and again to be re-shared and so on, in a self-reinforcing mechanism) must compete with the 'pessimistic' constructivist perspective. Indeed, constructivist pessimists view the same causal forces (identities, strategic culture and norms) and causal mechanisms (social interaction) as the optimist constructivists do but from a different perspective; they thus arrive at opposite conclusions.

Therefore, there are two possible conclusions based on the claim asserting, "Constructivists believe that repeated interactions can actually change the underlying beliefs, interests, and material categories of those who participate in them" (Friedberg, 2005, 35).

First, the transformation (the change) referred to in this phrase could be a *positive change*; indeed, from the optimistic perspective, social interaction favours the reduction of for example suspicion and insecurity by consequently favouring peaceful and cooperative relations and consequently bringing positive change. This optimistic perspective is accompanied by a confidence in the *virtuous circle* represented by the

'mutually reinforcing mechanism' between 'social participation' and self-socialization. That is, the more the state participates in international social interaction (via regional and global institutions), "the more the beliefs and expectations of its leaders will come to conform to the emerging universal consensus that those institutions embody" (Friedberg, 2005, 36).

However, in the second and opposite case, the change brought by social interaction results in a *negative change* in which it is exactly the likely social interaction to sharpen suspicion and insecurity, producing a *vicious circle* that by fostering mutual suspicion also favours conflictual relations within the international system (Friedberg, 2005, 34-39).

2.1.2 – Friedberg's outline applied to recognition studies

This perspective and the outline of this double-spirit that characterizes the constructivist perspective prove useful and valid beyond the specific case of US-China relations. In particular, it is useful with respect to the limits of the IR recognition studies perspective in gathering the complexity of international politics and relations. Indeed, adopting this frame of sub-strands of constructivism allows outlining and understanding some possible attempts using the IR recognition studies' framework to come to terms with the undeniable compresence of cooperative and conflictual relations, behaviours and politics.

Indeed, this ability to view the same phenomenon and read its positive or negative manifestations from an optimistic or pessimistic perspective can be useful in particular when addressing the manifestation of more complex and articulated international relations and foreign policies.

Given that the mechanism of social recognition, as framed by recognition studies, can predict both international peace and war, in the presence of both manifestations of peaceful and conflictual relations, authors can focus on one or the other half of observable manifestations.

Indeed, in situations in which both cooperative and competitive behaviours are present, being able to highlight the prevalence of one above the other helps scholars and practitioners to frame a more graspable situation.

Therefore, scholars and practitioners can adopt an optimist or pessimist perspective by focussing primarily on the manifestation of complying or competitive behaviours, respectively.

However, this approach to grasping and understanding a situation requires (and induces) scholars to both (1) tend to simplify the situation by focussing (only) on one type of manifestation (positive or negative) but nonetheless justify the other half of manifestations that would otherwise interfere with the main explanation, and (2) develop further and alternative explanations that can intervene with the intent of explaining the situation – by justifying it – and explaining the presence of the other half of observable behaviours. Therefore, positive elements (manifestations of conforming behaviours) are downplayed when the main interpretation is pessimistic, and vice versa; negative behaviours are downplayed or justified when the principal interpretation is optimistic.

2.2 – Downplaying and justifying the compresence of cooperative and competitive behaviours

Drawing on the framework built by Friedberg (2005) helps us to outline possible interpretations of the compresence of cooperative and competitive behaviours.

Indeed, given that, to impose their identity on the audience, frustrated powers (the misrecognized candidate) can turn to complying strategies (option 3) or to violent action and conflictual strategies (option 4); when scholars and practitioners face the presence of both strategies, they attempt to understand this compresence by adopting an optimistic or a pessimistic perspective. In the first case, from an optimistic perspective, they might consider the compresence as though it were a manifestation of complying behaviours typical of option 3, accompanied by negative behaviours that, although typical of option 4, still in the interpretation are not considered representative of conflictual intentions but rather outlier manifestations. The second interpretative option, the pessimist perspective, supports the compresence of behaviours as a prevalence of negative aggressive behaviours that clearly manifest strategy 4, with an anomalous presence of positive behaviours that are not symptomatic of option 3 but

that could simply be considered outliers within the strategy of aggressive and conflictual behaviour.

Therefore, optimistic or pessimistic framings are used as a means of focussing on one of the two manifestations, downplaying or justifying the presence of the other manifestations by resorting to other terms.

In particular, in this last case, given that option 4 should be leading to conflict and war, the positive behaviours can be explained as a 'cover story' adopted during preparation for conflict or as 'collateral' manifestations of behaviours that are irrelevant with respect to the strategy chosen and implemented to obtain identity recognition.

In contrast, option 3 plus negative behaviours is more difficult to explain and justify. Indeed, given that the prevalence of option 3 should be reassuring with respect to the evolution of international relations, it is thus difficult in a similar situation to trust that the manifestation of those negative behaviours is not relevant and can be ignored and justified in other terms. Underestimation or overreactions are possible mistakes that could be made in similar situations.

The next sections will be devoted to an analysis of these two options.

2.2.1 – Downplaying the presence of cooperative behaviours next to competitive behaviours

By focussing initially on the situation in which the candidate has decided to adopt conflictual politics as a strategy to gain identity and recognition, the presence of cooperative behaviours next to conflictual behaviours is almost irrelevant in the eyes of pessimist recognition scholars.

(I) – Understanding the prevalence of competitive behaviours by introducing the concepts of status quo, revisionist or revolutionary approaches

According to Suzuki (who supports that frustrated powers have incentive to turn to complying strategies), the problem concerns the fact that "The literature has tended to treat 'frustrated great powers' as synonymous with 'revisionist powers', with Hitlerite Germany and Imperial Japan being prime examples" (Suzuki, 2008, 59).

The conceptual triad *status quo*, *revisionist*, *revolutionary* is useful in helping to frame the problem from another perspective. This triplet has been employed in

different combinations; indeed, it can define powers, intentions or approaches. Status quo powers are powers that aim to preserve the status quo of the system; therefore, they have status quo intentions and apply status quo approaches (strategies and behaviours). At the extreme opposite, revolutionary powers are powers that aim at overturning the entire system (revolutionary intentions) and commit to completely changing it (revolutionary approaches). However, in between the other two options, revisionist powers aim at introducing revisions to the system (intentions) and apply revisionist approaches to reach this scope.

This triplet of concepts has been used to foster the debate between realists and constructivists³⁵, but it also characterizes both perspectives. Indeed, by leaving aside the realist-constructivist divide, it is possible to focus on the divide characterizing

³⁵ The issue of 'revisionism', as presented by Geldenhuys (2004), can be more generally placed within a larger understanding of the intentions of rising powers. Indeed, with the end of the bipolar system, the debate concerning the emergence of rising powers underwent an evolution; it passed from trying to understand whether the emergence of new powers in the system was more or less possible to – once more-concrete signals of power redistribution started to be identified – focussing on trying to understand the implicit intentions of potential rising powers.

The practical relevance of this analytical and predictive need has induced authors to address the possible scopes of ambitions of potential rising powers by classifying some possible 'types of rising powers' based on their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Indeed, what generally emerges from the literature is the possibility of identifying a continuum that, ideally, goes from 'absolute satisfaction' to 'absolute dissatisfaction', along which it is possible (with a bit of simplification) to identify three types of attitudes towards the international system, depending upon the states' degrees of satisfaction and the related scopes of their ambitions. Moving along this continuum by taking the start from the 'satisfied' pole, the first type of international standing can be defined as a "status quo state". This term refers to a situation in which the *status quo state* is satisfied with the international system. This type of state does not constitute any source of threat to the system, because its aim is to maintain and perpetrate it (Friedberg, 2005, 26-27; Johnston, 2003). On the opposite end of this continuum, one could identify the extreme case that refers to those states that are completely unsatisfied with the status quo (or very close to that point) and that can be defined as "revolutionary" states because they seek to completely overthrow the existing system (Friedberg, 2005, 26). Moreover, in the middle range of this continuum, one could identify a type of power that is 'partially' unsatisfied with the status quo. This state can be defined as a "revisionist" power, and its aims are to 'partially' revise the status quo. Indeed, these are "states that seek marginal adjustments to the status quo rather than fundamental change" (Friedberg, 2005, 27). This outline becomes more articulated when specifying that marginal adjustments could change in content or in degree. A change in content implies that marginal adjustments could refer to material power distribution, social status distribution, *and or* to the normative content – the "system of international rules and institutions" (Friedberg, 2005, 26), whereas a change in degree implies aiming at a *more or less marginal* amendment to the system. Some examples of these variants could be identified in the literature:

Indeed, by drawing on Ross (1997), Friedberg refers to China as a "conservative power", meaning a "cautious power with limited aims" (Friedberg, 2005, 27). China can be so defined when considering that, although not yet a completely satisfied status quo power, its revisionist aims remain very limited. "The concrete changes to the status quo that China's leaders seek are, arguably, comparatively limited: the reintegration of Taiwan with the mainland, rectification of some disputed borders, and the acceptance by the international community of its claims to portions of the South China Sea" (Friedberg, 2005, 27).

Conversely, as reported by Johnston (2003), Schweller conceives that revisionist states "will employ military force to change the status quo and to extend their values" (Johnston, 2003, 9; Schweller, 1994, 105). Moreover, another (harsher) example is given by Robert Gilpin, who identifies in the 'distribution of power', 'hierarchy of prestige' and "rights and rules that govern or at least influence the interactions among states" three components that "revisionist states seek to fundamentally alter" (Gilpin, 1981, 34; in: Johnston, 2003, 10).

the constructivist perspective itself. Regardless of whether, for realists, the driving force is represented by material power and systemic pressure, for constructivists, the driving force is represented by 'intentions' (Suzuki, 2008). A state can have status quo, revisionist or revolutionary intentions. Distinguishing the three situations can be particularly difficult, considering that elements characterizing the two extremes (status quo and revolutionary) might also characterize the in-between option (revisionism).

Therefore, the problem is that unsatisfied powers that are facing misrecognition in a situation of mismatch are usually considered revisionist powers that have revisionist aims and perform revisionist approaches. This finding implies that these powers are considered potential threats to the system and that the reaction to their international standing might be too strong for the situation, fostering escalation (in addition to insecurity)³⁶.

However, what are revisionist approaches? To understand this question, it is useful to recall Geldenhuys' (2004) definitions of 'political deviance' (meant as an act) and of 'political deviant' (meant as an actor).

The author, by building on sociological theories of deviance³⁷, studies "Deviant Conduct in World Politics" (2004). Keeping in mind that labelling 'deviant behaviours' and

³⁶ Indeed, Suzuki continues highlighting the negative aspects of a continuous attempt to predict threats: "Nowadays, these debates typically take the form of a cottage industry that seeks to predict the future challengers to the American hegemonic order and prescribe ways in which the United States should deal with them" (Suzuki, 2008, 59).

³⁷ Beginning with the assumption that any organized society (from the level of individuals to the international level) runs its affairs "according to rules" (Geldenhuys, 2004, 13), it is possible to arrive at considering also that both formal and informal rules create expectations of 'predictability'. Indeed, "Whether written or unwritten, rules bring order, regularity and predictability to the activities of the groups. These norms or standards of behaviour prescribe ways in which things should be done, or proscribe what may not be done" (Geldenhuys, 2004, 13).

The establishment of rules naturally calls for conformity, but it also by default implies the possibility of violations. This process relates to prescriptions and proscriptions; rules also "provide for punishment in the case of violations" (Ivi, 13). Indeed, notwithstanding the incentives to conform to and respect rules, 'infringement' of rules does occur, as reported by the author, both at the individual and international level. "There are compelling reasons for states and individuals alike to respect codes of conduct. Among other things, such observance 'is psychologically fulfilling, efficient, and carries the rewards of compliance and avoids the punishments of deviance'. Even so, there have always been states – like individual human beings – finding justifications for infringing standards of behaviour that others expected them to uphold" (Ivi, 13).

When 'infringement' occurs, provided sanctions become relevant; however, the options of punishment vary from "mild censure to expulsion from the group" (Ivi, 13). This variety of options is related to the fact that rules – together with conformity and violation – cannot be separated from the context of society; hence, *deviance* (meant as rule-breaking behaviour – behaviour that is not in accordance with rules or social norms) is "created by society". Indeed, the author, by drawing on Becker's sociological theory of deviance (Becker, 1973), reports, "'deviant behaviour is behavior that people so label'; whether an act is deviant depends on how others respond to it" (Ivi, 14). Again directly quoting Becker, "deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'" (Ivi, 14).

identifying deviant actors can be a political issue (and a political power), the important relationship between social behaviours and social context nevertheless leaves a strong imprint on the definition of "political deviance" at both the individual and international levels. Indeed, it is by building on the idea that deviance is 'created by society' and depends upon its being or not being labelled that the author arrives at defining political deviance as "direct and explicit acts that 'challenge the social order'" (Ivi, 14). Indeed, "deviant conduct is defined in terms of a departure from accepted norms of behaviour" (Ivi, 50). This departure can occur for specific social groups or for society as a whole, both at the level of individuals and at the level of international politics.

The role played by the social context is even more visible when considering (as reminded by the sociology of deviance) that "social rules are the creation of specific social groups" and that, given the 'high differentiation' of and within social groups, this point implies the possibility of identifying transgressive behaviours with respect to the norms set by a society 'as a whole' or to the norms pertaining to sub-groups. Indeed, as reported by the author, "(...) societies are 'highly differentiated' along class, ethnic, occupational and cultural lines. The problems they face in dealing with their environment and the history and traditions they carry with them result in groups often not sharing the same rules. This causes disagreement about the kinds of behaviour considered proper in any given situation. (...) Since there are in practice many cultures and publics, nonconformity may amount to the transgression of standards set by a subgroup or subculture, not those of society as a whole" (Ivi, 15).

Therefore, the identification of 'deviant behaviours' is related to the society itself, to time (in a certain historical moment a certain norm can be more or less relevant), and also to 'social power'. Indeed, "'social power' can determine who defines who as a 'deviant'" (Ivi, 16). For this reason, "the identity of the actor that commits deviation" is also relevant with respect to the "variation in responses to acts of nonconformity". Indeed, actors that are more powerful within the community can enjoy "greater 'deviant opportunity' than the powerless and also encounter less social control than their weaker counterparts" (Ivi, 15-16).

This all is also valid at the international level and for states. Indeed, the sociological theories of deviance "also speak to the behaviour of states and non-state groups" (Ivi, 13). Therefore, deviance within international politics is also 'created by society', depends upon the social context and time, and is strongly affected by 'social power'. With respect to sanctions and reactions to deviance at the international level, not only "deviant conduct may invite more than verbal censure, extending to tangible punitive measures such as diplomatic and economic sanctions". However, it is also important for the author to adjust this preceding theoretical perspective by considering the distinction between "'true' deviants"³⁷ and "'nominal' deviants" (Ivi, 15). What distinguishes one from the other is that, whereas in both cases, they "manifestly violate common standards of behaviour", the 'true deviant' goes through international censure and punishment, whereas the 'nominal deviant' (largely for reasons related to social context and social power) is able to escape it (Ivi, 15). Furthermore, the author revises this categorization by adding a third category that distinguishes the case of 'nominal deviant' states that are subject to international censure while escaping serious international punishment and, conversely, the case of 'nominal deviant' states that can escape both punishment and international censure. Directly quoting the author, "The hierarchy does not cater for the reality that some states breaking international norms are not the targets of serious international punishment. These could be described as nominal deviants. Consider the case of China, whose 'pervasive and unremitting' violation of human rights norms has led critical commentators to brand it a rogue or pariah state. Various aspects of China's external conduct have also caused concern, in at least the US. (...) Yet China has not been subjected to the kinds of punishment meted out to other errant states. The obvious explanation for this inconsistency or double standard is that China is too large, powerful and influential in the world arena to be subjected to the indignities and risks of punishment for unbecoming conduct. None of the 'real' deviant states of our case studies carried the same global clout as China and they thus lacked the same immunity from punishment" (Ivi, 46-47). Again, and with respect to the third category, "other nominal deviant states that have clearly violated commonly accepted standards of behaviour but have escaped international punishment or even mild censure" (Ivi, 46-47). The author also mentions Saudi Arabia, Turkey, India and Pakistan as possible examples (Ivi, 46-47).

From the above, it follows that the 'political deviant', as an *actor*, is reported being "likely to be characterized as someone who is irresponsible, unwilling to 'play the game' by the established rules, stigmatized, and dishonoured, and might be labelled a 'pariah'³⁸" (Ivi, 14).

Defining the 'political deviant' as *irresponsible* and *unwilling to play the game* provides a slight idea of what the concept of political deviance assumes. Indeed, defining political deviance as acts directly and explicitly challenging the social order implies that the lack of will in playing the game entails an effort in 'challenging the social order'.

This is well rendered also in the characterization of international political deviants; indeed, the author writes,

"It is in the nature of political deviants, we have noted, to challenge the prevailing social order. Several deviant states, our case studies will show, are deeply dissatisfied with the prevailing international order and wish to see it changed (Geldenhuis, 2004, 22).

Beginning with these considerations, he also applies "the concept of international order to the existing distribution of power in world politics and the accompanying rules or conventions of behaviour" by acknowledging that "international orders are not neutral in their consequences for states; some can benefit more than others from existing international arrangements". He comes full circle by maintaining,

"States that view the prevailing international order as inequitable and damaging to their interests typically wish to change the status quo. Adopting what is known as a revisionist approach"³⁹ (Geldenhuis, 2004, 22-23).

³⁸ "The term 'pariah' is a British corruption of 'paraiyar', one of the lower castes in southern India from which the British colonialists, during their long occupation of India, drew most of their household servants. Since then, the British and other Westerners have used 'pariah' to refer to 'the lowest of the low, an utter social outcast among his own kind' or, more generally, '(a)ny person (or animal) of a degraded or despised class'. In scholarly work the designation 'pariah' has been applied to, among others, cities, a social underclass and, perhaps most famously, to Jews in the diaspora. Several international politics scholars employed the term pariah state during the Cold War years. Although 'pariah' has since lost much of its earlier popularity as a label for errant countries, it is still occasionally used in this fashion to refer to, for instance, Israel, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Serbia and North Korea" (Geldenhuis, 2004, 1-2). See: Geldenhuis, 2004, 1-4.

³⁹ The author redefines the notion of revisionism "to make it more helpful in understanding some deviant states' responses to international order". He refers to three types of revisionism: (1) "Orthodox revisionism, occurring within the existing framework of ideas and relations, is aimed at restoring the dissatisfied state's previously held place or status in the international hierarchy or at least giving the challenger an improved position in the global pecking order (as with Imperial Germany and Imperial Japan before World War I and Germany again after the War)". (2) "Revolutionary revisionism challenges the entire set of assumptions and organizing principles of the international

From the above, a strict relationship emerges between *deviant behaviour* (the manifestation of the conduct that departs from the 'accepted norms of behaviours') and the implied aim of this behaviour (namely, challenging the system). Therefore, one can conclude that those who perform deviant behaviours aim at revising the system.

A consideration can be advanced at this point: the concept of international order, applied to the concept of deviance, implicates a correspondence (overlap) between the manifestation of the behaviour and the implied purposes that are assumed lying behind those behaviours. Indeed, when a deviant behaviour is performed or observed from this perspective, a revisionist intention can be assumed.

2.2.2 – Justifying the presence of competitive behaviours next to cooperative behaviours

In contrast, when adopting an optimistic perspective, the manifestation of both cooperative and competitive behaviours can be framed as the presence of positive cooperative behaviours (given that intentions are positive and peaceful) with the presence of negative behaviours, which can be justified in other terms. We introduce in the next sections some possible justifications for the (com)presence of negative behaviours next to the positive manifestations of the positive intentions of the status-seeking candidate.

(I) – Mistakes in the implementation process

As reported above, the mechanism of the recognition process resembles the mechanism of a socialization process and requires the positive conformation of the candidate to the formal and/or informal rules of the society to which he is trying to adhere. However, as reported by Long and Hadden (1995) in their description of the socialization process itself, during the process of adaptation to rules as implemented

system (the Soviet Union after 1917, and Libya and Iran more recently). For them, justice requires that the established order – characterized by subordination and exploitation – be overthrown or transformed". (3) "Radical revisionism, which falls between the other two forms, is geared towards both self-advantage and reform of the system (illustrated by the earlier mentioned propagation of a New International Economic Order). (...) Paradoxically, many of the states taking a revisionist position on the prevailing world order are at the same time the staunchest defenders of some of its basic precepts. (...) The liberal conception of world order, with its emphasis on intra-state justice (based on democracy and human rights), is anathema to most deviant countries" (Geldenhuys, 2004, 23).

by the candidate, he – although conscious of the complying requirements of the process – might commit mistakes in the implementation of the process of adherence and compliance to (formal or informal) rules and norms.

Indeed, leaving aside the situation in which the candidate is 'unwilling' to comply⁴⁰, it is possible to consider that the candidate, when willing to comply with the mechanism of 'socialization' and compliance as required by the recognition process, might be *unable* to comply, or might commit mistakes while genuinely attempting to comply.

Similar mistakes can be manifested through the adoption of behaviours that are perceived by the audience as 'negative' or competitive.

(II) – Gaps between the social world of socialization and the real world

By referring to Long and Hadden's (1995) conceptualization of the socialization process, it is always possible to find another explanation for the 'anomalous' presence of negative behaviours next to the manifestation of positive behaviours (symptomatic of positive, complying intentions).

When Long and Hadden (1995) outline their *reconception* of the socialization process (see section 4.5.1), they emphasize that during the process of socialization as applied by the group on the candidates, and particularly during the process of 'creation', when the members of the group are 'showing' to candidates the specific content of the membership of the group – when they are showing the 'cultural' aspects and 'social organizational' aspects of the group⁴¹ – a process of 'simplification' of this same content occurs. Indeed, as the authors report,

“What members show novices displays the requisite of group life, but it *does not exactly duplicate the actual world of the members*, even that small part passed on in socialization. Socializing agents highlight selected features of the requisites, emphasize some at the expense of others, exaggerate some, and elaborate others less than fully. This is inevitable, for socialization requires some abstraction and crystallization of the members' world, the full complexity of which can be neither

⁴⁰ A similar situation is not understandable under the optimistic perspective because the candidate is proving 'negative' intentions.

⁴¹ *Culture* is defined as follows: “Consisting of a system of rules putatively shared by all members, the culture of a group constitutes a set of integrative principles around which members forge a common bond and carry out their activities”. *Social organization* is said to consist “of a system of social positions by means of which groups divide their tasks and differentially allocate them among member” (Long, Hadden, 1985, 42).

shown in the time available nor comprehended by newcomers. From the members' point of view, therefore, socialization shows a somewhat distorted picture of the group's culture and organization. But for novices, this distortion is virtually all that is available, and that fact inevitably creates some adjustment problems and generational differences between members and novices which change the group even as it is sustained" (Long, Hadden, 1985, 45).

This process of simplification of the content ("abstraction and crystallization of the members' world") is presented as necessary because it is impossible to replicate perfectly the complexity of the real world of the group. However, this same 'simplification' can create a 'gap' between the content of the real world of the group and the 'image' that is 'shown' to candidates as a bearing for the process of socialization. This '*distorted picture* of the group's culture and organization' is the only element available for the candidates' orientation, implying that the candidates will adhere to it as much as possible. Once they have completed the socialization process, they will find themselves facing the reality of the so-called 'real world' of the group, which is different from the distorted image that was given to them. Therefore, the candidates, once having entered the group, must adapt and *adjust* themselves to the 'real reality of the group' – to the *real* culture and organization of the group.

In addition to this first gap, the authors identify another possible gap between the process of socialization and the real world of the group. In particular, the authors claim that in situations in which the group is wide, the process of socialization can be 'institutionalized' in a self-existing reality that exists within the group and that includes the presence of 'socializing agents' addressing the process in the name of the rest of the group. Indeed, directly quoting, the authors highlight that

"Creating and incorporating differ from members' primary activities. That is, socialization has its own unique culture and social organization which constitute a separate social world of socialization distinct from the social world of members. It is crucial to keep the distinction in mind, for many events of socialization, and some of its putative outcomes as well, take their character from the world of socialization, not the world of members. The more differentiated the socialization process from life as a member and the longer its duration, the more well developed and distinct the social world of socialization will be, and the more likely it will exert an independent influence on novices' behavior. The more elaborated this world of socialization, in turn, the greater the need to socialize both novices and socializing agents for it, so that they will know how properly to socialize and to be socialized" (Long, Hadden, 1985, 46).

Therefore, this parallel coexistence of the real world and the 'social world of socialization' that can develop its own 'culture and social organization' constitute another possible gap in the process of socialization.

Given these two gaps, it is evident that once the candidate has completed the process of selection and joined the real world of the group, he or she must address the 'adjustment problems' and readapt to the real content of culture and social organization characteristic of the group (and not of the process to join the group).

Something similar can be found in the analysis made by Jozef Bátora (2013). By studying Slovakia's process of membership in NATO, the author finds that the behaviour that the candidate displays during the process of gaining membership is different from the behaviours that the candidate adopts once it becomes a member. In particular, the author highlights that during the selection process, candidates avoid adopting non-complying behaviours because they are evaluated specifically on their compliance with the institution's standards and policies. However, upon gaining membership, the candidates allow themselves also to adopt non-compliant behaviours to promote 'specific interests'.

Indeed, the author reports that

"While prior to membership, countries are recognized for their compliance with NATO standards and policies, upon membership countries get the opportunity to promote specific interests legitimately and may seek recognition via non-compliance with NATO mainstream. (...) While prior to membership recognition was achieved by compliance and identification with NATO standpoints, policies and actions, upon membership, recognition is achieved by differentiation from these patterns" (Bátora, 2013, *abstract*).

Although the author in his articles primarily highlights the 'powerful source of conditionality' represented by the process of recognition, it is extremely interesting for us to note instead that this work confirms, at the international level, what Long and Hadden have identified at the social level. In recognition processes occurring in the international arena, we can also find *gaps* between the process of socialization and the real world of the group.

Therefore, to conclude, this gap and the consequently needed process of 'adjustment' to the real world can be identified as a possible explanation of the presence of the negative, non-complying behaviours – as supported by Bátora himself (2013).

In other words, the candidate follows certain requirements during the process of admission to the group. These requirements oblige him to behave prosocially. This point is also perfectly in line with the fact that the process of socialization and the process of recognition are both conceived as characterized by social-relational features; therefore, they are presented as being prosocial. Once it has overcome the access threshold of the membership to the group, the former-candidate (new-member) must readapt its knowledge of the behaviours that are required and admitted in the group. In this specific situation (once a member), it must join the group in the available behaviours depending upon its aims and intentions – and depending upon the group itself. Therefore, according to a report by Bátorá (2013), when the new member wants to pursue its own interests, it can do so by performing non-compliant behaviours. The candidate can seek recognition by performing non-compliant behaviours (Bátorá, 2013).

This finding highlighted by Bátorá (2013) is interesting and opens new room for further studies that focus on the compresence of behaviours in certain institutions. However, this perspective leaves aside the explanation of the compresence of behaviours observed specifically during the process of socialization to a certain group. Moreover, this perspective reinforces the mainstream idea according to which recognition processes as much as socialization processes require prosocial behaviours to be socially accomplished.

(III) – Role-theory perspective

Another possible approach to framing the presence of deviant behaviours next to conforming ones is by analysing with more attention the prescription of the recognition game and in particular by focussing on the identification of the norms and rules to which one should conform.

More specifically, the two authors who define and characterize the 'recognition game' as largely about conforming to rules and norms – Ringmar in the first instance and Suzuki by directly drawing on his work – appear to refer to two different types of norms.

In particular, when defining the recognition game, Ringmar asserts that the case of a state that wants to improve its social position is, "in sociological terms",

"the situation of the self-conscious outsider or social upstart who tries to conform as closely as ever possible to the rules which govern life in a certain social setting. By conforming to the rules he makes it possible for others to recognize him as the kind of person to whom these rules apply" (Ringmar, 2002, 121-122).

Therefore, in Ringmar's view, a state that is seeking status improvement (the candidate) should conform to "the rules which govern life in a certain social setting". Conversely, Suzuki, although directly quoting this same sentence by Ringmar, qualifies norms differently a few lines before the quotation. Suzuki writes,

"In the context of 'legitimate great power' status, a 'frustrated great power' can persuade its peers that it should be accorded this position by following two steps. First, as 'a state is defined as a great power to the extent that it conforms to the social discourse that defines great power status at any particular time', it needs to identify the collective social norms and rules which govern 'legitimate great power' identity. Second, the 'frustrated great power' must then persuade its peers that it is worthy of this status. This often takes the form of a 'recognition game'. As Ringmar notes:

this is the situation of the self-conscious outsider or social upstart who tries to conform as closely as ever possible to the rules which govern life in a certain social setting. By conforming to the rules he makes it possible for others to recognize him as the kind of person to whom these rules apply" (Suzuki, 2008, 50; quoting Ringmar, 2002, 121-122).

Therefore, although in this case, the recognition game is also about conforming to rules, the fact that Suzuki qualifies them as (1) "the social discourse that defines great power status" and (2) "the collective social norms and rules which govern 'legitimate great power' identity" (Suzuki, 2008, 50) originates an important distinction from Ringmar's characterization that is worthy of further analysis.

Going by order, Ringmar's qualification of the rules with which one must comply as "rules governing life in a certain social setting" suggests that he is referring to both the formal and informal rules that govern life in a certain social setting – namely, those rules that are agreed between the actors. In the international arena, these rules can be identified with international law in general, customs and more in particular with common norms and principles characterizing a specific historical context.

Conversely, Suzuki is referring to something different when he refers to the *social discourse* (that defines great power status) or again when he refers to the 'collective social norms and rules' that govern the *identity* of legitimate great powers. Both expressions refer to the set of features that are commonly recognized as characterizing the identity of legitimate great powers. The key word signalling the difference between the two authors is precisely "identity".

Referring to the rules and norms that constitute the 'identity' of a certain social status (the legitimate great power status in this specific case) implies an indirect reference to 'role theory'⁴².

Within this sociological theory, "status" refers to the social position of an individual, and "role" refers to the 'set of behaviours, that within a certain society, are attributed to a certain social status'. Therefore, each status has its own set of roles, and it can have more than one single set of roles – in which case it is referred to as a 'complex of roles', which also bears the risk of producing, within the same status, contrasting expectations of behaviour (Ghisleni, Moscati, 2001, 43-48).

However, what is relevant here is that the *identity* of a certain social status is given by the *roles* that are attributed to (and expected from) that specific status.

By returning to Suzuki's work and in particular to the clarifications that he makes about the 'social discourse that defines great power status', it is possible to find similarities between how he presents it and the social theory of roles. Indeed, the *social discourse* (that defines great power status) is presented as being a condition that is necessary to meet to be "defined as a great power". Its content is qualified as a combination of mutual recognition, institutional privileges and institutional responsibilities.

Therefore, the 'rules' to which a status seeker should conform correspond instead to the set of roles constituting the identity of the pursued status. In the specific case of 'frustrated great powers' seeking great power status, because the identity of great powers comprises both *duties* and *rights*, the compresence of 'rights' next to 'duties' might explain 'negative' behaviours performed by status seekers, next to positive ones.

⁴² See also Thies, 2010.

In more detail, in this case, the process of recognition is strongly affected by the characteristics attributed to the identity of great powers. For instance, great powers status is characterized – together with (1) large material (i.e., military, economic, territorial, and demographic) power and (2) special social status 'commonly' and 'reciprocally' recognized by peers and inferior powers – by (3) a combination of special rights and duties. The 'rights' refers to the 'privileges' of having the possibility, because of the corresponding material capacity, of influencing both society and its rules. The 'duties' refers to the 'obligation' of being held responsible to uphold the norms of the society (Suzuki, 2008). Indeed, great powers are 'great' in their ability to *mould* the international normative content – although they are recognized as having this special status only in exchange for their being responsible for upholding and protecting the norms and the system itself.

Furthermore, with particular consideration of this third point, the compresence of 'duties and responsibilities' together with 'special rights' and the "power to weaken the normative structures of the society" (Suzuki, 2008, 47) might explain a mixed performance by 'frustrated great powers'. Indeed, if great powers are recognized as having the attributes of both 'duties and rights', then should states seeking great power status – given that they must *imitate* the identity of that specific status – perform both components.

However, two criticisms can be addressed towards this possible interpretation. In the first case, this interpretation could explain assertive behaviours only in the case of states that are seeking great power status. However, it does not explain the situations in which this same phenomenon is performed by states' simply seeking a 'higher' status – referring to those situations in which a candidate is attempting to improve its position with respect to the one in which it is currently recognized.

In the second case, returning to Suzuki's work, it is possible to highlight that he, himself, contradicts the abovementioned possible explanation. Indeed, with respect to the combination of 'duties and rights' attributed to legitimate great powers, he specifies that greater attention should be focussed on the component of duties, initially by the great powers themselves and subsequently by 'frustrated great powers'. With respect to the first case, he writes,

"To consolidate their institutional privileges, the 'legitimate great powers' have had to exercise caution in imposing their privileges upon the smaller powers, and ensure

that 'legalised hegemony [is] introduced gently or surreptitiously'. (...) This also means that 'legitimate great powers' are expected – at least in theory – to be 'status quo' powers that do not attempt to radically alter the balance of power or seek to overthrow the moral fabric of international society at the expense of other members" (Suzuki, 2008, 47).

This *cautious* perspective also persists when it is about the process of recognition, which states that are seeking great power status undergo. Again quoting Suzuki,

"So how can a 'frustrated great power' attempt to become a 'legitimate great power' today? To examine this process, we first need to examine the 'social discourse' which defines this status in contemporary international society. It will be recalled that 'legitimate great powers' enjoy mutual recognition as equals with one another, institutional privileges, and responsibilities to collectively uphold the core norms of international society. For a 'frustrated great power', the last characteristic becomes particularly important in its 'recognition game', as being seen as a 'good citizen' that is willing to protect and propagate the rules of the society may become a crucial means by which it can demonstrate its worthiness as a 'legitimate great power'.

This requirement for ideological conformity has acquired greater importance in the post-Cold War international society under American unipolarity. (...) In this normative environment, the 'legitimate great powers' have now been given a new opportunity to fulfil their responsibilities of actively promoting and enforcing the rules for 'legitimate membership' of international society. Crucially, these new duties now reflect the society's dominance by the West, and entail the promotion of 'good domestic governance' towards 'illiberal' or 'rogue' states. (...) As a consequence, the other 'legitimate great powers' have been co-opted and are increasingly expected to play a partnership role in imposing or advocating this new 'standard of civilisation'" (Suzuki, 2008, 50).

To summarize, states seeking great power status are also expected to focus primarily on the performance of great powers' duties. Candidates are indeed, according to the author, required to perform as 'good citizens'. Therefore, for a candidate seeking great power status, the content of that specific status consists of both positive and negative roles ('duties' *and* 'rights'). However, the process of socialization to the status's role is framed (and suggested) as requiring exclusively behaviours that are compliant with duties only – with the prosocial role-component of the status itself.

This process implies that candidate states seeking great power status should and are expected to perform exclusively 'good citizen'-style behaviours. Any possible manifestation of negative-assertive behaviours is indeed appointed and postponed to *after* the candidate's accomplishment of the great power status. Indeed, once the candidate is recognized as a great power he must behave thusly, but during the

process of recognition – during the process of status seeking – he must behave as a 'good citizen'.

This approach to framing the recognition process (in exclusively *positive* terms only) reduces, once again, the opportunity to frame and explain the presence of negative behaviours during the process of socialization – even to great power status. Indeed, during the recognition process, it would be odd to observe the manifestation of negative, assertive behaviours next to the exclusively compliant ones – as required and suggested.

Therefore, it is even more difficult to understand and explain the coexistence of deviant and conforming behaviours observable in the international standing of status seekers.

2.3 – Conclusions

The fact that recognition studies on their own are unable to gather the compresence of positive and negative behaviours and that the additional adoption of further explanations that consider the presence of both but that instead of 'explaining the compresence' focus on justifying the presence of the second component leaves for the development of further analyses that aim at explaining the observed compresence of behaviours within the same policy and during a recognition-seeking process.

Here lie the interests of this research, which is guided by the intent to understand the compresence of conforming and deviant behaviour within the international standing of a status seeker, both of which behaviours are observed during the recognition process.

The aim of this research is not limited to finding a justification for the presence of the 'other' type of behaviour. Rather, it aims to find an analytical framework that can specifically explain the compresence of both behaviours.

The intent of this research is not to put aside the interpretative framework that has emerged from recognition studies but to integrate that framework with a further option that focusses understanding on the compresence of behaviours.

Ahead of this intent, in the next chapter, some interesting findings that have emerged from studies on children's behaviour will be introduced as a basis for a possible analytical framework that might be able to close the gap of the recognition

studies. The new framework might give a comprehensive explanation, able to include the manifestations of both positive and negative behaviours.

Chapter 3

1 – A new perspective: looking at the IR theoretical framework on recognition process from the updated perspective of child developmental psychology

From IR literature on recognition process and status seeking literature emerges that there are two types of strategies available for the accomplishment of the status-seeking process and to obtain recognition. These possible strategies are complying/cooperative (prosocial) strategy on the one hand and competing/competitive (antisocial) strategies on the other. Moreover, from IR literature on recognition and status seeking emerges the existence of a clear-cut separation between the two options of behaviours, in fact, fundamental characteristic to this outline is that the two options are conceived as diametrically opposite options. These two alternative options of international behaviour are indeed interpreted as a manifestation of opposed intentions of cooperation/compliance on one side and competition on the other. Similarly, they are also seen as manifestations of opposite cooperative or competitive foreign policies, also implying opposite intentions towards the social group.

Moreover, the imperatives of the recognition process, as outlined by filo-constructivist IR scholars from 1990s on, suggest that status seekers should conform as closely as possible to the norms and rules of the group whose recognition they are seeking for (Suzuki, 2008; Ringmar, 2002). It is on these basis that Suzuki highlights the "strong allure" of norm conformity in order to accomplish status seeking in international system⁴³ (Suzuki, 2008, 50). In other words, this perspective asserts that the recognition process is best accomplished through the implementation of norm conforming behaviours⁴⁴. Under this perspective, one should expect to observe behaviours that conform and comply with the group's social norms and expectations.

⁴³ The implication is that under this current theoretical formulation, when observing international candidates seeking for status recognition, one should expect to encounter behaviours that are solely conforming to and complying with the group's social norms, rules and expectations.

⁴⁴ To insist on the point, the more articulated/complex formulation of recognition game (as reported in framework 2), which takes into consideration the possible reactions available to status seeker candidate, outlines that complying/confirming behaviour is a strategy that is still available also in case of misrecognition. In this case, opting for confirming behaviour is a signal/attempt to peacefully convince the audience to concede/grant the recognition.

Therefore, according to this perspective, it is possible to assert that in the IR conception of recognition process, prosocial strategy (norm confirming and complying behaviours) results being the best strategy for positively accomplishing the status recognition process (Suzuki, 2008, 50).

Conflictual/competitive behaviours are instead presented as the available strategy in case the social recognition process jams or gets stuck.

As emerged from the previous chapters, the current IR theoretical framework developed from recognition studies, manifests its shortcomings when dealing with composite foreign politics of status seekers. In fact, the current framework on the international process of recognition is not able to comprehensively understand and explain the compresence of deviant behaviours next to complying behaviours.

This all creates some difficulties in understanding more complex, articulated and not clear-cut foreign policies in which elements of both behavioural strategies may be present. Therefore, the current IR theoretical framework, together with its complementary alternative explanations (see chapter 2), are not able to find a possible *ratio* behind the compresence of different behaviours this because, at the basis of this IR theoretical framework, there is *a traditional conception* that conceives complying and deviant behaviours as opposed, antithetical, and incompatible.

1.1 – The IR traditional perspective on dichotomous antisocial-deviant behaviours: its characteristics and origins

With regard to the origins of this assumption, it is the case to report that this traditional conception, cornerstone of the IR theoretical framework on recognition, has been, for many years, the prevailing one in many other fields. Therefore, it is indisputable that this traditional conceptualization of the relations between prosociality and antisociality was still the prevailing perspective when – around the second half of 1990s, after the constructivist turn – IR scholars turned to other disciplines in order to restore, within the IR field, the importance of issues related to identity and recognition (Geis et al., 2015). Since, IR scholars were drawing from other fields which shared this same traditional perspective, it therefore appears explainable the reiteration of this traditional assumption.

Yet, what is intriguing here is that, only a few years after IR literature expanded its horizons towards cross-disciplinary borrowings from political theory, social philosophy, and social psychology, social psychology itself underwent a groundbreaking theoretical and conceptual drift that transformed the entire discipline and revolutionised precisely this traditional perspective that used to assume incompatibility (dichotomy) in the relations between prosociality and antisociality (Mayeux et al., 2011; Smith, 2007; Ladd, 2005).

In the updated perspective, as will be outlined in the following pages, not only prosocial and deviant behaviours are compatible in their combined adoption, but it is also identified a socially adaptive and functional role of deviant behaviours with regard to status seeking. Moreover, with specific regard to popularity status seeking, empirical observations confirm the adoption of a bistrategic combination of deviant and complying behaviours – aimed at the attainment of higher levels of *social-reputational* status.

Therefore, IR scholars not only arrived at recognition studies with a certain delay, but they also had the misfortune of drawing from a version of social psychology that, in a few years, was going to be profoundly revised.

What could have been interpreted as a limitation of the IR theoretical concept on recognition process, however, has turned into a theoretical shortage of the same. In fact, the implications underlying the articulate conclusions achieved in social psychology suggest that overcoming the assumed incompatibility between prosociality and antisociality, would open, for the IR literature as well, the possibility to understand – or at least the necessity to investigate – the compresence of complying-cooperative behaviours and assertive-deviant behaviours within the foreign policy of an international status seeker.

Notwithstanding this potentiality, this updating process hasn't taken place yet so that the current IR literature persists on building on the traditional perspective of the role of deviant and antisocial behaviours. Therefore, what could have been an unfortunate coincidence, constituted the basis for IR's theoretical shortcomings.

However, it is also possible to identify various reasons that can explain the complication experienced by IR literature in further enlarging its cross-disciplinary borrowings. In fact, as further dealt in chapter 1, IR's failure to update to these new findings can be understood if considering that IR scholars in the 1990s, while

introducing these cross-disciplinary concepts and findings to the field, strongly felt the pressure to extensively justify the adoption of these alternative explanatory elements. Hence, while (from 1998 on) social psychology redefined itself from its foundations, updating to similar ground-breaking changes would have implied for IR scholars the necessity to completely re-question the foundations of their recent borrowings. This all, in a moment when these recent borrowings were already questioned themselves, or at least strongly perceived as under scrutiny. Hence, it is not difficult to imagine that, in a similar situation, IR literature found little or no space for an additional and broad revision of those insights and formulations that – just a few years before and with a certain difficulty – were derived from social psychology.

Moreover, another hindrance can be found in the fact that, given the revolutionary scope of the 1998-updated findings, the field of social psychology itself spent many years in further investigating these results and their substantial implications (Cillessen, et al., 2011). This implies that these revolutionary conclusions, being for many years under an ongoing process of investigation, may have been perceived as unfinished.

Nevertheless, however explicable these difficulties may be, still IR's missing update of the new perspective on the relation between prosociality and antisociality specifically produced the current shortcomings characterizing the IR theoretical framework on the recognition process.

1.2 – The introduction of findings achieved by child developmental-psychology studies

Given the current scenario of IR theory on recognition process, this chapter will turn to concepts and constructs pertaining to the field of developmental psychology, focussed on child and adolescents peer relations studies which undertake an evolutionary perspective. The reason these studies are here introduced relates to the fact that, interestingly in contrast to this IR formulation, recent findings achieved by evolutionary developmental psychology show and confirm that there is a more complex relation between aimed social status and behavioural strategies.

More in detail, it emerges that the best strategy for the accomplishment of status seeking depends on the type of status which is aimed. Indeed, given that there are

different types of status, the best strategy for the accomplishment of a certain type of status depends itself on the type of status which is aimed. In fact, social psychologists arrived at identifying a distinction in the processes necessary to obtain high *likeability status* on one hand, and high *popular status*, on the other hand (Pellegrini et al., 2011a; Pellegrini, 2008; Hawley 1999a; 2002; 2003a, 2003b). The popularity process – differently than the likeability process which requires the adoption of complying behaviours – entails a (contextual) combination of complying and deviant behaviours. In other words, in order to gain or maintain popularity, deviant-antisocial behaviours are needed in combination with complying-prosocial behaviours.

Therefore, the socio-psychological literature, in its updated perspective, asserts that best strategy for the attainment of *reputational* status (comparable to status in IR), is a functional combination of complying and deviant behaviours.

These findings reached by developmental scholars support the utility for IR literature to draw from peer relations studies. Indeed, these insights emerging from developmental psychology support the necessity for IR literature to investigate a more nuanced outline of the relations between aimed-status and associated behavioural strategies. This would allow a more nuanced understanding of the compresence of complying and deviant behaviours in international interactions.

1.3 – Advancing useful terminological clarifications

In conclusion and before focussing on the next sections, it is here necessary to anticipate some terminological clarifications, given that the milestone at the basis of the 1998 turning point in the peer relations studies consisted in the definitive disentanglement of the misused term of 'popularity'.

This thesis adopts the nomenclature advanced by Cillessen and Marks (2011) who – considering that peer relation scholars have advanced and used different nomenclatures to refer to the two different types and constructs of 'popularity'⁴⁵ –

⁴⁵ In more detail, Parkhurst and Hopmeyer (1998) adopted the couplet "sociometric popularity" (aka *likeability*) and "perceived popularity" (aka *popularity*). This nomenclature has been criticized by Cillessen and Marks (2011, 30). They emphasized the disadvantages of continuously having to qualify the term popularity and the bias created by the incorrect use of the terms sociometric in opposition to perceived, given that 'perceived popularity' is actually assessed through sociometric methods. "To suggest that 'perceived' is not 'sociometric' is confusing as well, when

prefer the labels of 'popularity' and 'likeability' to the other alternatives. In particular, leaving further details to the upcoming sections, *likeability* when referring to dimensions of social acceptance, and *popularity* when referring to reputational status. Furthermore, with regard to the alternative labels, the two authors propose to adopt as synonyms for *likeability* the terms "*acceptance* or *preference* (depending on how it is measured)". Conversely, they advance that simply the term 'popularity' can be used to refer to the 'dimension of social standing' referring to *popular status* (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 31).

In line with these recommendations, this research also follows the authors suggestion to relabel, when possible, the adoption of the term 'popularity' that was made under the 'traditional sociometric classification system' (when it was used as a synonym of likeability/acceptance), with updated alternative labels as 'acceptance', 'social acceptance' or likeability itself (Cillessen and Marks, 2011, 29-31).

Therefore, to avoid further confusion, in this research the term *popularity* will hereafter be used, when possible, exclusively to refer to reputational, popular status (measurements of most/least popular peers in the group), and the term *likeability* will be used to refer to dimensions and assessments of social acceptance (measurements of most/least liked peers in the group).

Finally, additional basic conceptual and terminological points of reference will be made when necessary to address the reader's orientation and understanding of the field of research on peer studies and developmental psychology.

sociometric methods are used to assess both" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 30). Adjustments to these problems presented by this couplet have been proposed by some authors, who advanced "alternative terms for perceived popularity" such as "*judgmental popularity* (Babad, 2001), *reputational popularity* (Prinstein & Cillessen, 2003), and *consensual popularity* (de Bruyn & Cillessen, 2006a)" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 30). However, as reported by Cillessen and Marks, "Such terms, however, do not solve the somewhat problematic use of the term *sociometric popularity*" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 30). Thus, given the problématiques related to this nomenclature, this research will avoid as much as possible this couplet. Other terminologies that have been used include prosocial popularity (for likeability) and peer-perceived popularity (for popularity).

2 – Developmental psychology on peer relation studies and the twofold 1998-turn: discovering the distinctions between popularity and likeability statuses

The insights according to which popularity is related to prosocial and antisocial elements were based on the conceptual clarification and distinction between popularity and likeability and strictly related to the empirical assessments that proved that the two constructs – popularity and likeability – were related to different attributes and expectations. These two elements, which came out contemporarily in 1998, constituted for peer relations research, two fundamental cornerstones that represented a *divide* for the upcoming orientation of peer relations studies.

The 1998 turn comprises two main points: (1) a new conceptualization of the *popularity* construct, which until then was considered a synonym for the construct of *likeability*. Since, popularity was finally examined alongside the construct of likeability, it emerged that the two constructs are different. (2) A new understanding of the relations existing between *likeability* and *popularity* concepts on the one hand and *antisociality* on the other hand was finally introduced and was incorporated into the peer relations studies literature.

2.1 – From ambivalence towards conceptual distinction: likeability and popularity conceived as correlated but different constructs

This section will specifically focus on the first step of the 1998 turn; indeed, it will revise the passage from the terminological and conceptual overlap between popularity and likeability towards the final distinction into two different constructs. It will be possible to follow the passage from conceptual overlapping towards the final clarification and distinction reached in 1998 by following the historical evolution of the sociometric methods and how both terms and concepts were adopted over the years.

2.1.1 – Ambivalence at the terminological level

To understand the conceptual distinction introduced within peer relations studies at the end of the 1990s, it is necessary to move from understanding the long-lasting and confused relationship existing between peer relations studies and the terms and concepts of 'popularity'.

As reported by William Bukowski (2011), the term 'popularity' entered the scholarly literature at the beginning of the 20th century, but it was not associated with a specific conceptualization or definition. Thus, the term 'popularity' was used for many years in a general and flexible sense and was loaned to different concepts and constructs.

Indeed, as reported by Bukowski himself, "The word *popularity* (...) was taken from common usage and inserted into the vocabulary of peer relations without much thought about the construct it was meant to represent" (Bukowski, 2011, 9).

2.1.2 – Methodological level: the 1998 evolution of the sociometric methods

To make this discourse more understandable, it is possible to retrace this overlap (and its clarification) by focussing in particular on the sociometric methods adopted within peer relations and their evolution. By specifically focussing on the sociometric methods – adopted within peer relations studies due to its 'ability to assess peer group structure'⁴⁶. Indeed, *sociometric methods* are adopted by peer relations studies to assess members' "peer status in classrooms and schools"⁴⁷ (Cillessen, Marks 2011, 27; DeRosier, 2008; see also: Kupersmidt, De Rosier, 2004; Cillessen, Bukowski, 2000; Coie, et al., 1982).

Moreover, one of the most interesting elements here lies in the fact that within sociometrics, 'assessing members' peer status' does not refer to one single type of status. Instead, it can refer to different *categories of status* that can be assessed by

⁴⁶ "By comparing liking and disliking nominations, researchers can distinguish a member's place within the social structure" (DeRosier, 2008).

⁴⁷ Sociometrics is reported to have various advantages for this function. Indeed, sociometrics is said to be a highly reliable and valid methodology, given that the evaluation that is obtained through this methodology is based on multiple informants. This point refers to the numerous respondents that can coincide with all of the members of the peer group or only a subset of it (see Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 33-34). Furthermore, sociometrics is also characterized by 'increased sensitivity to variations within a specific group context' (DeRosier, 2008; see also: Kupersmidt, De Rosier, 2004; Cillessen, Bukowski, 2000; Coie, et al., 1982).

focussing on different 'dimensions' (aspects) of social interactions occurring within the studied peer group. Indeed, producing a different ranking of the same group based on the different types of status that are considered might be possible.

Therefore, it is also possible to state that sociometrics allows the assessment of various structures existing within a peer group according to the various categories of status that can be examined. Indeed, when examining a specific social unit, peer relations researchers can focus on 'a wide variety of *aspects (dimensions)*'⁴⁸ of the interactions occurring within the peer group.

To link sociometrics to 'popularity' issues, among the types of statuses that can be assessed through sociometric methods, likeability and popularity are among the possible options.

Therefore, beginning with the consideration that sociometrics allows assessing group social structures according to the observed aspects (dimensions) of peer interactions and considering that sociometric methods have been adopted by peer researchers from the 1930s on (Cillessen, Marks, 2011), it is once more possible to highlight that the focus on *aspects (dimensions)* of peer interactions did vary through the years. The long process sociometric methods have undergone beginning in the 1930s is marked in particular by two moments that occurred in the last decades of the 20th century – the first in 1982 and the second in 1998.

Although this research is interested in the final version that emerged from the 1998 turn, to understand the current status of peer research, it is necessary to understand its roots and their evolution. Therefore, in the following sub-section, we will focus on

⁴⁸ Directly quoting DeRosier (2008), "Within a given social unit, researchers have examined a wide variety of dimensions that typically fall within one of three broad categories: social behavior; social support; and liking. Antisocial interactions (e.g., aggression), prosocial interactions (e.g., cooperation), and social connectivity (e.g., withdrawal) are commonly assessed social behaviors. For example, researchers may measure the amount of conflict that occurs within a friendship or how socially isolated a child is within a peer group. In contrast, social support research focuses on the functional attributes of a relationship, such as trust, intimacy, and aid. For example, researchers may examine the degree to which members of a clique provide companionship and advice for one another.

Numerous studies have been devoted to assessing the level of liking within a social unit. In large part, this emphasis is based on evidence that the experience of liking versus disliking significantly impacts social behavior as well as a broad array of functional outcomes ranging from self-esteem to delinquency to use of mental health services. In a cyclical fashion, liking, social support, and social behavior influence one another over time. For example, poor social skills interfere with the formation of social support networks and decrease liking within the peer group that, in turn, decreases opportunities to practice social skills with peers and exacerbates social behavior problems".

aspects of the 1982 traditional method, which can be said to constitute the basis upon which the 1998 conceptual disentanglement was built.

Historically, it is possible to report that in the 1982 model, in the traditional classification system, the term 'popularity' is conceived as a synonym for 'acceptance' and 'social preference' because the term 'popularity' in the *Coie et al. (1982) procedure* does not refer to a specific variable or construct. Instead, it is used as a label indicating a *set of variables* that are adopted to "index a child's general liking-, disliking-, and status-based experiences with peers" (Bukowski, 2011, 4; Cillessen, Marks 2011). This usage of the term popularity is not limited to the Coie et al., procedure; indeed, it was the standard in both studies accomplished before 1982 and those published thereafter that applied this accepted procedure (Cillessen, Marks 2011).

The fact that the label of popularity was used as a synonym for *likeability* – and how it can represent terminological inaccuracy – does not constitute a problem *per se* until we consider that in some other studies, popularity was meant as its second meaning – as a specific variable assessing reputational status.

This terminological confusion was favoured by two elements: first, the term popularity was interchangeably used to refer to both constructs and measurements (popularity and likeability). Second, it strongly contributed to the fact that the two concepts have never been addressed conjointly. This point prevented scholars from addressing a contemplated choice of terminology and the related conceptualization, thus allowing the confusion to occur.

The problem was highlighted clearly and officially in 1998. Indeed, the disentanglement was made officially clear in 1998 when – in correspondence with the publication of Kathryn LaFontana and Antonius Cillessen, which will be further considered later – Jennifer Parkhurst and Andrea Hopmeyer published their study in which, after a long period of terminological overlapping in which the two concepts have remained separate, "sociometric popularity [namely *likeability*], typically conducted by developmental psychologists, and reputational, dominance-based popularity [namely *popularity*], typically carried out by sociologists" were finally and for the first time assessed within the same research (Mayeux et al., 2011, 79).

This study aggregates fourth and fifth grades as a social unit and asks respondents "about peers they liked the most and the least *and* about peers they saw as popular and unpopular"⁴⁹ (Mayeux et al., 2011, 80; Cillessen, Marks 2011, 28). In other words, when investigating the various *aspects of social interactions*, the Parkhurst and Hopmeyer study is not limited to *likeability* (most/least liked), as is true with the *Coie et al. (1982) procedure*; it also focusses on assessing *popularity* (most/least popular).

As mentioned above, it was precisely the fact that the two constructs were addressed conjointly that allowed authors to clearly distinguish between the two and highlight that they were officially addressing two different constructs (likeability and popularity) that referred to two different measurements (being liked and being popular).

To address the understanding of the 1998 turn and clarification, the next section will focus on presenting the 1982 status using the traditional method but highlighting three main elements: (1) the *aspect/s (dimension/s) of social interaction* that the method examines; (2) for each aspect of interaction, what *sociometric dimensions* are assessed, and how are they measured; and (3) what *sociometric status types* emerge from these assessments, based on which it is then possible to assess the group's social structures.

Furthermore, following this analysis, specific attention will be devoted to the underlying content related to the term and concept of 'popularity' in this specific version of sociometric methods. Figure 3 will be used to render features of the method accessible under a simplified version.

(I) – Sociometrics in 1982: assessing likeability through the standard sociometric model

For sociometrics, 1982 was the year in which Coie, Dodge and Coppotelli (finally) introduced a "standard sociometric procedure and a method of classifying children into sociometric status groups"⁵⁰ (Cillessen, Marks 2011, 28).

⁴⁹ Emphasis added.

⁵⁰ This procedure can also be referred to as the 'Coie, Dodge and Coppotelli (1982) method' or 'Coie et al. (1982) procedure' (Cillessen, Marks 2011, 27-28; Coie et al., 1982). Furthermore, this 1982 method can be referred to as 'traditional' to distinguish it from the updated method employed following the 1998 turn (Cillessen, Marks 2011, 28).

The institution of this procedure had the advantage of introducing a *standard* sociometric procedure and method that, as reported by Cillessen and Marks, "was subsequently used rather consistently in research for over two decades" (2008, 27).

To better understand the procedure and its terminological system, it is possible to retrace the abovementioned different aspects of sociometrics as developed in this specific 1982 method.

With respect to the three main elements that help us understand this procedure, when focussing on the first one – the various *aspects of social interactions* that can be studied under peer research – the *Coie et al. (1982) procedure* is based only on measurements of the dimensions of *likeability*.

In other words, the procedure requires peer members participating in the study to identify the peers that according to them fit two specific categories: *most liked* and *least liked* (Cillessen, Marks 2011, 27-28; Coie et al., 1982).

The second element is that with respect to the *sociometric dimensions of likeability* that are assessed through this process of nominations, this method entails a process of counting the nominations received for both categories, this for each of the participants – followed by a standardization of the counting. This allows each participant to be assigned a personal score "on four continuous sociometric dimensions" that, in this specific method, are labelled (1) acceptance, (2) rejection, (3) (social) preference, and (4) (social) impact (Cillessen, Marks 2011, 27-28; Coie et al., 1982). Each dimension is the result of a counting or calculation. In further detail, as reported by Cillessen and Marks,

«Acceptance is the number of "liked most" nominations received. Rejection is the number of "liked least" nominations received. Preference is the acceptance score minus the rejection score. Impact is the sum of the acceptance and rejection scores» (Cillessen, Marks 2011, 27-28).

Finally, with respect to the third point, concerning the *sociometric status types*, based on the counting of nominations – and after specific cut-offs⁵¹ – each participant can be assigned to some sociometric status types that in the *Coie et al. (1982) procedure* are divided into five types of status. The *traditional sociometric status categories* are thus explained by Cillessen and Marks:

⁵¹ Reported by the authors as "often ± 1 SD" (Cillessen, Marks 2011, 28).

«“*popular*” (high preference; liked by many, disliked by few), *rejected* (low preference; disliked by many, liked by few), *neglected* (low impact; neither liked nor disliked), *controversial* (high impact; liked by some and disliked by others), and *average* (average on all four dimensions)”» (Cillessen, Marks 2011, 28).

By keeping in mind that it is possible to assess different types of status, it can be concluded that this 1982 classification system allows assessing the structure of a peer group with respect to these five status categories.

Figure 3: Coie, Dodge and Coppotelli (1982) method

<i>Coie, Dodge and Coppotelli (1982) method</i>				
1) ASPECTS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION		2) SOCIOMETRIC DIMENSIONS	Measured as	3) SOCIOMETRIC STATUS TYPES
<i>Likeability</i>	<i>Sociometric dimensions of Likeability:</i>	(1) <i>Acceptance</i>	Sum of 'liked most' nominations received.	a) popular b) rejected c) neglected d) controversial e) average
		(2) <i>Rejection</i>	Sum of 'liked least' nominations received.	
		(3) <i>Preference</i>	<i>Acceptance</i> score minus <i>Rejection</i> score	
		(4) <i>Impact</i>	<i>Acceptance</i> score plus <i>Rejection</i> score	

(II) – 1998 turn: Likeability and Popularity, two different constructs indicating two different status types

As previously done for the Coie and colleagues (1982) method, it is possible to briefly retrace also here the three main points that are helpful to understand the use that Parkhurst and Hopmeyer (1998) made of the two concepts.

Indeed, when comparing it to the Coie and colleagues (1982) method, it is possible to highlight that, with respect to the first point – the various *aspects of social interactions* that can be studied under peer research – as seen in Figure 4, the 1998 method, in addition to *likeability*, also focusses on aspects of *popularity*. Indeed, when adopting

this new method, studies collecting sociometric data nominations also include next to 'most liked' and 'least liked' nominations for 'most popular' and 'least popular' (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27-29).

This method implies that with respect to the second point, a fifth *sociometric dimension* is added to the abovementioned four traditional ones. Therefore, the new sociometric dimensions, next to the traditional *acceptance*, *rejection*, *preference* and *impact* – which (as reported in Figure 4) are measured as mentioned for the 1982 method – also list popularity. There are two possible options to assess the sociometric dimension of *popularity*: by summing the standardized number of nominations for 'most popular', or by subtracting the number of 'least popular' nominations from 'most popular' nominations – "popularity minus unpopularity nominations" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 28).

Given the long-lasting mixing of terms, it is important here, as reported by Cillessen and Marks, to emphasize that the dimension of popularity is a further and different one with respect to the dimensions of acceptance and preference. Indeed, directly quoting the authors,

"Acceptance and preference are dimensions of likeability, derived from peer nominations of who is most and least liked. Popularity is a dimension of power, prestige, or visibility, derived from nominations of who is most and least popular" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 28-29).

From these considerations derives the conclusion that the dimension of popularity – meant as a dimension of social status given by power, prestige or visibility and not as a dimension of *likeability* – is

"conceptually closer to the traditional sociometric dimension of social impact defined previously as the sum of "liked most" and "liked least" nominations received, which is also an indicator of how socially visible someone is in a group, irrespective of the valence of the behavior that attracts others' attention" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 28-29).

Thus, when moving to the third element of the analysis of sociometric methodologies – the variety of *sociometric status types* – it is possible to highlight that, as in the previous cases, the 1998 sociometric method introduces the new *popular* status next to the above-listed statuses (accepted – which in the 1982 method was referred to as 'popular' – rejected, neglected, controversial, and average).

Figure 4: 1989 method (update of the Coie, Dodge and Coppotelli (1982) method)

1) ASPECTS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION		2) SOCIOMETRIC DIMENSIONS	Measured as	3) SOCIOMETRIC STATUS TYPES
Likeability	<i>Sociometric dimensions of Likeability:</i>	1) <i>Acceptance</i>	Sum of 'liked most' nominations received.	a) accepted ⁵² b) rejected c) neglected d) controversial e) average f) popular
		2) <i>Rejection</i>	Sum of 'liked least' nominations received.	
		3) <i>Preference</i>	Acceptance score minus Rejection score	
		4) <i>Impact</i>	Acceptance score plus Rejection score	
Popularity	<i>Sociometric dimensions of Popularity:</i>	5) <i>Popularity</i>	Option 1: Sum of 'most popular' nominations received.	
			Option 2: 'Most popular' nominations minus 'least popular' nominations received.	

2.1.3 – Constructs of Likeability and Popularity: measuring two different types of status through emotional and reputational judgements

Among the abovementioned, by focussing in particular on the *accepted* and *popular* status types, it is possible to highlight that these types of statuses are the result of two different typologies of measurement. Indeed, in the first case, the status of an *accepted* (highly liked) peer is "the result of individual judgements of likeability"

⁵² Under the traditional sociometric method, it was referred to with the label 'popular'.

given by the other peers. These judgements are qualified by Moreno (1934) as "*emotional judgements*"⁵³ because, as reported by Cillessen and Marks, they result from

"an individual's private sentiments of attraction or repulsion about another that are not necessarily shared with the group or by the group. The resulting likeability scores (acceptance or preference) in a sociometric assessment are composites of these sentiments. If many participants in a classroom or grade nominate a certain peer as someone they like (and not as someone they dislike), this person is well accepted or highly preferred in this group. This is a summary or composite of individual liking and disliking judgments rather than a consensus that is explicitly communicated or discussed in the group" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 30).

In contrast, judgements concerning popularity do not concern private emotional feelings but are an individual report concerning 'reputation' and reflect a shared perception; indeed, Cillessen and Marks continue,

"Popularity judgments are not private sentiments but rather reputational judgments. They are not summaries of personal attractions or repulsions; they are a general consensus of who is most popular and least popular as seen by everyone in the peer group" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 30-31).

This implies that *popularity*, measuring power, prestige or visibility, is a dimension of the individual's *social standing* within the group and that the status of 'popular within the peer group' refers to these evaluations.

Therefore, to conclude the focus on the methodological evolution of sociometrics, the 1998 update established a clear separation between the constructs of popularity and likeability and the related diverse types of statuses – *popular status* in one case and *accepted status* in the other.

⁵³ Emphasis added.

2.2 – Likeability and popularity conceived as two different constructs with different associations

Beginning with the acquired awareness of the distinction between the constructs of popularity and likeability and their respective correspondence to two different types of status (popular status and accepted status), it is possible to turn now to the new understanding of the relationships existing between these two status types and the social expectations and associations related to the two constructs.

Indeed, the second cornerstone achieved by peer relations studies at the end of the 20th century concerns a strictly related feature and implication to the just-mentioned conceptual distinction. Indeed, together with the awareness of the fact that *popularity* and *likeability* are two different constructs referring to two different social-relational aspects, dimensions and statuses, at the end of the 1990s, it finally is incorporated into the scholarly literature together with the finding that popularity and likeability are related to different associations and social expectations. As reported by Cillessen and colleagues,

"Since the 1990s, a growing number of studies from a variety of fields have illuminated the distinction between being liked (our old definition of popularity) and being socially powerful. Our understanding of the various forms of high status, how they are alike and different, and how they fit into the ecology of the social group has been greatly improved by the efforts of these researchers" (Cillessen et al., 2011, xi).

In other words, once it was demonstrated that popularity and likeability refer to two different types and measurements of social status – one related to visibility, prestige and status (popularity) and the other concerning personal-emotional relationships (likeability) – the other step reached by peer relations studies at the end of the 1990s entails the investigations of the qualifications that peer members attribute to and acknowledge as characterizing both the popular status and the accepted (highly liked) status.

Insisting on this point – whereas *likeability* (disregarding the misleading terminology that has been adopted to indicate it) has traditionally been associated

with *prosocial attributes*⁵⁴ – it was only in relation to a clear separation of the concept of *popularity* (from the concept of likeability) that the longstanding intuition according to which popularity is also "associated with some negative behaviours and outcomes" was finally investigated and confirmed by empirical data (Cillessen, Marks, 2011). Indeed, it was finally confirmed that popularity is different from how it was traditionally conceived – "a thing to be desired and indicative of positive adjustments and commendable social skills" (Mayeux et al., 2011, 79).

What is groundbreaking in this instance is the fact that whereas likeability, as is traditional, continues to be associated with positive attributes, the new construct of popularity (considered a dimension of visibility and prestige) is instead associated with both positive and negative elements. Therefore, the 'dark side' of popularity finally came to the attention of scholars (Mayeux, 2011).

2.2.1 – 1998 studies that officially opened the way to research on the dark side of popularity

This turning point was reached thanks to two studies that were conducted separately by two research teams and both published in 1998. One is the abovementioned research by Parkhurst and Hopmeyer that linked together sociology with sociometry. The other one is the study conducted by Kathryn LaFontana and Antonius Cillessen, which focussed instead on investigating the qualifications of the attributes related to the various social statuses.

Going by order, a relevant role for these conclusions is played by the abovementioned study conducted by Parkhurst and Hopmeyer. This study not only supported and proved the distinctiveness of likeability and popularity constructs⁵⁵ but also gathered empirical data that confirmed that likeability (acceptance) is associated with positive attributes "like kindness and trustworthiness" (Mayeux et al., 2011, 80) and that popularity is "linked to both positive and negative attributes" (Mayeux et al., 2011, 80).

⁵⁴ To give some examples, prosocial behaviour, low levels of aggression, good social-cognitive and emotion regulation skills, kindness, and trustworthiness (Mayeux et al., 2011, 79).

⁵⁵ In the original study, authors refer to likeability and popularity respectively as "sociometric popularity" and "peer-perceived popularity" (Parkhurst, Hopmeyer, 1998; Mayeux, 2011, 79-81).

Equally interesting is the 1998 study, conducted by LaFontana and Cillessen and based on a different methodology ("a simple vignette study"), that arrived at consistent conclusions⁵⁶. In this case, the two authors – while intent in investigating the associations and social expectations related to the status category of likeability/acceptance⁵⁷ by replicating the established relation between socially accepted peers and the positive expectations ascribed to them by group members – found out that children associated to their popular peers both positive and negative attributes and expectations (Mayeux et al., 2011, 80). Therefore, whereas likeability, as

⁵⁶ The LaFontana and Cillessen (1998) study was intended to investigate the content associated with the traditionally accepted social status category of likeability/acceptance (traditionally referred to as 'popularity' – see above, Figure 4). Indeed, this study was aiming at replicating the traditional finding according to which "children had universally positive expectations about socially accepted peers" (Mayeux, et al., 2011, 80). However, the results obtained by these findings contrasted with expectations; this because final results were divergent from previous and traditionally accepted conclusions within peer relations studies. As reported by Mayeux and colleagues, "The children's responses showed that their stereotypes of popular peers were a combination of positive and negative attributes and expectations, including reports of getting along well with others but also having hostile intent toward peers" (Mayeux, et al., 2011, 80).

These findings confirm and further strengthen the results achieved by Parkhurst and Hopmeyer; they confirm the "mixed nature of popularity" by finally giving scholarly space to considerations concerning the "dark side" of popularity (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27; Mayeux et al., 2011, 79). Indeed, once more, "studies with children and adolescents have shown that popularity is associated with some negative behaviours and outcomes".

The above implies that "the anecdotal perception of popularity as a mixed bag is confirmed by empirical data in the child and adolescent literature" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27). It is interesting to highlight that two studies that were separately conducted, adopted different methodologies and aimed at different intents obtained similar and reinforcing results. Nonetheless, the achievement of these findings might sound less surprising when considering that for a long time, similar hints had been part of the common knowledge and 'anecdotal perception' that has historically perceived and described the *popular status* as a "mixed blessing", thus upholding the idea that "popularity is not always good" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 26-27).

Therefore, when it was officially claimed in 1998 that popularity (distinguished from likeability) was a "dual-natured construct", instead of being a complete surprise, the discovery "made intuitive sense to many researchers who, looking back to their own middle school days, certainly had memories of the 'in' crowd" (Mayeux, et al., 2011, 80; Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27).

It is also important to report that peer relations research undertaken in the 20th century did manifest different hints confirming the anecdotal perception and anticipated the 1998 groundbreaking insights; see for example Boorman, 1931; Hermans, 1931; Jennings, 1937; and Tryon, 1939 (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 29). Therefore, the two studies published in 1998 (and the following ones that were outlined according to these findings), joined the "small but growing literature suggesting that popularity is not a universally positive thing" (Mayeux, et al., 2011, 80).

The long-lasting terminological confounding that has characterized peer relations literature on the one hand has hindered an official acceptance of the fact that the construct of popularity, differently from the construct of likeability, has a *dual nature* (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27). On the other hand, it has contributed to the marginalization of this peer relations literature, which was already suggesting that popularity is associated with both positive and negative behaviours and outcomes (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27; Mayeux, 2011, 80).

However, 1998 was ultimately when the "mixed nature of popularity" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27) clearly emerged, opening the way for further investigation in this direction. Indeed, due to the confirmed distinction between social acceptance and popularity (and by beginning with it), different studies have focussed on further investigating the relationship between *likeability*, *popularity* and both *prosocial* and *antisocial* behaviours.

⁵⁷ This traditional social status, as outlined in the Coie et al. method of 1982 was labelled as 'popularity' – as reported above in Figure 3.

traditionally, continues to be associated with positive attributes⁵⁸, popularity – considered as a distinct construct, dimension of visibility and prestige – is instead associated with both positive and negative elements.

These shared findings that relate popularity to both prosocial and antisocial associations, are not so surprising if considering that during all the 20th century, similar hints have been part of the common knowledge and 'anecdotal perception' that has historically perceived and described the *popular status* as a "mixed blessing", thus upholding the idea that "popularity is not always good" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 26-27). Therefore, when it was officially claimed in 1998 that popularity (distinguished from likeability) was a "dual-natured construct", instead of being a complete surprise, the discovery "made intuitive sense to many researchers who, looking back to their own middle school days, certainly had memories of the 'in' crowd" (Mayeux, et al., 2011, 80; Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27).

Moreover, during all the 20th century, this anecdotal perception of the dual nature of popularity status was also accompanied by various studies that did manifest different hints confirming this anecdotal perception and anticipating the 1998 groundbreaking insights; see for example Boorman, 1931; Hermans, 1931; Jennings, 1937; and Tryon, 1939 (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 29). Therefore, the two studies published in 1998 joined the "small but growing literature suggesting that popularity is not a universally positive thing" (Mayeux, et al., 2011, 80).

In fact, the groundbreaking contribution made by both the 1998 studies consisted in the clarification of the distinction between the two constructs of popularity and likeability – which retrospectively allowed to better understand all these previous insights.

It is therefore strengthened the notion according which the abovementioned long-lasting terminological confounding that has characterized peer relations literature has, on the one hand, hindered an official acceptance of the fact that the construct of popularity, differently from the construct of likeability, has a *dual nature* (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27). On the other hand, it also has contributed to the marginalization of those (already minor) studies which (during all the 20th century) have been suggesting

⁵⁸ To give some examples, prosocial behaviour, low levels of aggression, good social-cognitive and emotion regulation skills, kindness, and trustworthiness (Mayeux et al., 2011, 79).

that popularity is associated with both positive and negative behaviours and outcomes (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27; Mayeux, 2011, 80).

Hence, it was finally in relation to a clear separation of the concept of *popularity* (from the concept of likeability) that the longstanding intuition according to which popularity is also "associated with some negative behaviours and outcomes" was finally investigated and confirmed by empirical data (Cillessen, Marks, 2011).

On these basis, 1998 was ultimately when the "mixed nature of popularity" (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 27) clearly emerged, opening the way for further investigation on the social expectations and associations related to these two constructs of popularity and likeability. Thanks to these further studies, the 'dark side' of popularity, strongly, came back to the attention of scholars (Mayeux, 2011). Therefore, by establishing this clear distinction of constructs, the two 1998 studies paved the way for a deeper investigation and a further understanding of the relationship existing between *likeability*, *popularity* and both *prosocial* and *antisocial* behaviours⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ Given the newness of these studies, it can be said that the bulk of the research is represented by investigations aiming at more nuanced understanding of the associations between the two types of high status (popularity and likeability) and various forms of aggression – conceived/considered as representative of deviant, antisocial attitudes and behaviours. indeed, emerging studies focussed both on attributes and behaviours; both elements are investigated through open-ended studies that aim at gathering an idea of the attributes and behaviours that peers identify as associated to a certain type of status

3 – Further studies investigating the complexities of the status-behaviour relation. Focus on the role of deviant and antisocial behaviours

Once Parkhurst-Hopmeyer and LaFontana-Cillessen opened the way to the new perspective, a new wave of developmental studies followed. Among the variety of studies, what this research is interested in are particularly those studies that focussed on the relationships existing between likeability and popularity statuses and various forms of sociality and antisociality (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2004). More specifically, we are interested in the findings concerning the relationships between popularity and prosocial and/or antisocial attributes, this in order to understand the behavioural strategies associated to the different types of status.

The final intent is to highlight and investigate the link between the compresence of complying and deviant behaviours and the process of recognition.

However, this need is also unintentionally reflected by the orientation and needs of the peer relations research itself; indeed, once the new path of research within developmental peer relations studies was opened, scholars devoted their investigations to the assessment of the relationships existing between the two types of status (social acceptance/ likeability and popularity) and their related attributes.

In most cases, specific attention was devoted to the antisocial attributes (related to likeability and popularity).

This is perfectly in line with the fact that developmental social psychology has always harboured a deep concern about social harmony, social reforms and social improvements (Smith, 2007, 74-75). Indeed, most of the attention of the traditional studies focussed on likeability measurements that were specifically addressed towards identifying social *rejection* (see Figures 3 and 4) to understand its relationships with social incompetence and maladjustment, such as 'risk taking' and social deviance (for example, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, and school dropping).

During the investigation of possible elements that can obstruct social harmony directly or indirectly, scholars did focus their attention on various attributes related to likeability and popularity. Some studies focussed on investigating relationships existing between likeability, popularity and other social behaviours and/or attributes. For example, studies were conducted on investigating relationships with behavioural and

academic risk (see: Mayeux et al., 2011, 88-90) and with social behaviours such as bullying and defending behaviours (see: Mayeux et al., 2011, 90). Similarly, studies have investigated the implications of popularity for friendships and romantic relationships (see: Mayeux et al., 2011, 92-94). Moreover, when reversing the perspective, interesting studies have also been conducted directly on "investigated the correlates of popularity by simply asking children and adolescents to list attributes they feel are characteristic of popular peers" (Mayeux et al., 2011, 91).

Because this orientation within the field is quite recent, the variety of investigations can be considered wide with respect to the number of studies conducted. Therefore, the number of investigations per type of investigated attribute is quite small – with an exception being the number of studies directly asking students to qualify the correlates of popularity, which is growing.

It emerges that, among this variety, the favourite investigated attribute is *aggressiveness* in its various forms. Indeed, as reported by Mayeux and colleagues (2011, 83), "The bulk of the research establishing discriminant validity between social acceptance and popularity has focussed on their associations with various forms of aggression".

3.1 – Aggressiveness meant as social deviance: investigating antisociality by focussing on forms of aggressiveness

It is possible to focus on *aggressiveness* as a form of antisocial behaviour and retrace the findings of peer relations research that investigated the associations between likeability/social acceptance, popularity and these forms of, as they are traditionally called, antisocial behaviours.

First, referring to aggressiveness implies referring to different types of aggressive behaviours among which 'physical aggressiveness' is only one type. Indeed, next to *physical aggression* (measured in some studies as "start fights, say mean things, and/or tease others"), it is also possible to include *relational aggression* – measured in some studies as "keep others from being in the group during activities or games," "ignore or stop talking to other kids when they are mad at them" (in fifth grade), "ignore others or spread rumours about them when they are mad at them" (in

sixth grade), "ignore others or spread rumours about others when they are mad at them," and "try to keep others who they do not like from being in their group" (from seventh until ninth grade) – see Cillessen, Mayeux (2004, 151).

Scholars have also distinguished aggressive behaviours on the basis of its being *proactive* or *reactive*. Examples of proactive aggressive behaviours is bullying behaviour used by the students 'to attain dominance as they enter a new social group' (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 127; see also Pellegrini, Bartini, 2001, Pellegrini, Bartini, Brooks, 1999; Rodkin et al., 2000). While an example of reactive aggressive behaviours is behaviour usually adopted by kids who are victims of bullying behaviour and who react by adopting aggressive behaviour (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 127).

Given that this research is not interested in specific types of aggressiveness but is instead interested in the role that antisocial behaviours have within social interaction, hereafter, the terms *aggressiveness*, *aggression* (and similar) will be adopted with a wide and general meaning that includes all of the different forms of aggression. Thus, the distinction between types of aggression will be minimal, but more discussion follows on the features of antisociality characterizing this type of behaviour.

3.2 – Presenting the traditional perspective of the status-behaviour relation

Once these clarifications are made, it is possible to pursue the findings reached by developmental peer relations studies concerning the social role of aggressiveness. However, to understand these findings and their scholarly context, it is here necessary to first recall the traditional perspective shared among traditional developmental peer relations studies. Indeed, from the traditional perspective – before the 1998 turn – antisocial behaviours of aggressiveness were conceived as *maladaptive* and symptomatic of *social incompetence (maladjustment)*.

Therefore, the next section will focus on understanding the reasons why child psychology used to conceive complying and deviant behaviours as opposed, antithetical, and incompatible. The section, will focus on understanding the components characterising the child psychology's traditional conception, its origins and the elements fostering the widespread acceptance and adoption of this traditional perspective.

3.2.1 – Characters of the traditional conception: incompatibility between complying and deviant behaviours, and different assessments of the social functionality of deviant and complying behaviours

The traditional perspective that conceives complying behaviours as opposed to deviant behaviours builds on two main elements. On the one hand, there is the asserted incompatibility between the two types of behaviours, that implies a clear and strong dichotomy between the two, that result as not convergent nor compatible. On the other hand, while deviant and complying behaviours are separated, they are also assigned with, opposite, assessments on their social performances – their abilities to properly perform within the social group. In fact, the conceived incompatibility between complying and deviant behaviours – at the basis of this traditional conception – is itself combined with a further underlying character that, while equating deviant behaviours with socially *maladaptive* and *incompetent* behaviours (Smith, 2007, 74-75), it also specularly equates complying behaviours with *socially competent* and *functional* behaviours. The identification of these two, separate, links – between deviance–maladjustment on one hand and compliance–social competence on the other – also implies that adopting deviant behaviours is seen as "lacking social skills" (Smith, 2007, 65), while on the opposite, adopting complying behaviours is understood as a manifestation of 'having social skills'.

For a better understanding: although the significance of 'social incompetence' may be intuitive, still it is possible to gather a stronger understanding by accounting the definition that Rubin, Bukowski and Parker (1998, 644) provided for *social competence*. The three authors conceive *social competence* as "discrete behaviors that lead children to solve social tasks or achieve social success" (quoted in: Aikins, Litwack, 2011, 141). It follows that 'maladjustment' is consequently conceived as a "disharmony between the individual and the social relations in which he [the child] must live" (Smith, 2007, 75; quoting the U.K. Underwood Report of 1955, Report of the Committee on Maladjustment Children).

In other words, the couplet *social competence*, *social incompetence* refers to the presence or absence, within the individual, of the ability to properly interact and integrate within its social context.

Keeping this in mind, it is now even more evident that associating deviance with social maladjustment and social incompetence implies that, when observed, manifestations of deviant behaviours are understood as signals of an individual's inability and deficit in understanding social context and the related, required, and socially admitted behaviours. Again, while deviant behaviours are socially incompetent and maladaptive, complying behaviours are, on the other hand, behaviours that manifest the social competence of the individuals that adopt them.

Thus, coming full circle, it follows that there is no attributable ratio to observed compresence of both behaviours. Indeed, the abovementioned incompatibility between prosociality and antisociality is corollary to this further, and widely shared, traditional dichotomy between the two types of social behaviours.

To conclude, in a similar outline, the adoption of aggressive behaviours – and more in general deviant or anti-social behaviours – represents a socially *dysfunctional* strategy, a strategy that, when implemented, has no social competent or adaptive function. This is asserted on the bases of the fact that the implementation of deviant behaviours has no positive social impact or outcome – this given that deviant behaviour is exclusively associated to social incompetence and maladjustment.

Specularly to the dysfunctionality of deviant behaviours, and given the assumption according which individuals adopting prosocial-complying behaviours are capable of properly moving within the social context, it follows that complying behaviours harbour instead a *socially functional* and *adaptive* role.

3.2.2 – Origins of the traditional perspective: the ideological and ameliorative approach

In order to further understand the characters of the traditional perspective, and in particular the implied dysfunctionality associated to deviant behaviours, it is necessary to turn to the context in which this perspective originated. In fact, a case can be made that the traditional dichotomy and incompatibility between complying and deviant behaviours originated directly from the ideological and ameliorative approach that pervaded child studies and child psychology disciplines since their foundation.

The next section will focus on illustrating the social and historical context in which child studies and child psychology rose, and also on outlining the contents and implications of the ideological and ameliorative approach itself.

Moreover, the following section will underline the consequences that the ideological-ameliorative approach had on the articulation and conceptualization of the traditional perspective on deviant and complying behaviours.

As reported by Smith (2007, 75), "Child study followed by child psychology developed in an ideological context of social reform, mental hygiene, and social engineering [ethos]", this because in general both the 19th century and the 20th century were characterized⁶⁰ by social reforms, the majority of which were directed at children (Fagan, 1992, 236, reported in Smith, 2007, 75).

By focussing on child psychology, it is possible to report that these studies originated – both in Europe (UK) and in Northern America (US and Canada) – strictly 'bounded up with other practical disciplines and hopes of social reform and improvement' (Smith, 2007, 74). Insisting on the point, and directly quoting Smith, the author reports that,

"Universal and compulsory schooling was coming to these developing industrialized countries [UK, North America], and the new discipline of child study was intimately involved in both documenting normal patterns of behavior, and in diagnosing and dealing with patterns that proved difficult for schooling, or more generally for behavior in line with social reform aspirations" (Smith, 2007, 74).

Therefore, the original intent of this approach was to identify those behaviours that could have represented a challenge for the society; this with the aim of reforming or at least reducing their disruptive effects on the society. In fact, the premises on which child psychology was founded grounded on the aspiration of accomplishing an efficient society with efficient social institutions – among which it possible to mention schools (Smith, 2007, 75). Corollary to these ambitions, was the willingness to 'improve children' in order to make them "behave in accordance with the wishes of social reformers" (Smith, 2007, 75). In fact, as Smith continues, the main ambition is that "They [the children] should behave well in school, and not engage in deviant or antisocial behaviours" (Smith, 2007, 75).

⁶⁰ The 19th century in its later years, and also due to the historical context related to the two World Wars, the 20th century mainly in its beginning.

Hence, these 'societal concerns'⁶¹ constituted an ideological and ameliorative approach that pervaded the discipline of child psychology for almost all the 20th century (Smith, 2007, 74-77). This ideological-ameliorative approach is well resumed by Cora Bussey Hillis, who reports the guiding idea characterizing traditional child psychology: "If research could improve corn and hogs, it could improve children" (Smith, 2007, 75; quoting Parke 2004, 2; quoting Sears, 1975).

When implemented, these ideological and ameliorative premises, resulted in a concern with "practices of investigation, diagnosis and reformation of maladjusted and delinquent children"⁶² (Smith, 2007, 75). As a consequence, these antisocial behaviours were seen as symptoms of social deviance and therefore were addressed as behaviours to be isolated and eradicated from those social behaviours an individual was allowed or encouraged to implement.

In fact, in accordance with this orientation, "the difficult child was gradually reconceived in terms of maladjustment" (Rose, 1985, 165; quoted in Smith, 2007, 75), thus generating the abovementioned assumption that on one hand equates (and associates) deviant behaviours to social maladjustment and incompetence, and complying behaviours to social competence, while on the other hand it separates prosocial-complying behaviours from deviant-antisocial behaviours thus creating a strong dichotomy among the two.

3.2.3 – Conceptual shortcomings result of the ideological and ameliorative approach: confounding socially undesirable with socially incompetent behaviours, and overlapping individual to social benefit

The ideological and ameliorative approach – the abovementioned *engineering ethos*, that aimed at attaining a functional society – which permeated child studies and child psychology since their establishment, has entailed a widely shared confusion between different underlying meanings associated to the concept of 'deviance' (Smith, 2007, 73-78).

⁶¹ The expression 'societal concerns' is adopted by Parke (2004, 2; quoted by Smith, 2007, 75).

⁶² In fact, with specific regard to the UK case and its strict relation with the mental hygiene movement, it is between 1920s and 1930s that, as implementation of this approach, juvenile courts and child guidance started to arise in the UK (Rose, 1985; reported in Smith, 2007, 75).

With this regard, Smith (2007) and Sutton (et al., 1999a; 1999b), identify that child psychology studies where mostly built on a widely shared confounding between the notions of *socially undesirable* behaviours with that of *socially incompetent* behaviours (see, Smith, 2007, 73, 77-78).

More in detail, on the one hand, *socially undesirable* behaviours correspond to those behaviours that, being 'deviant from social norms', contrast with the societal concerns and interests of the society, and therefore are not sought-after by the society itself (Smith, 2007, 73).

While, on the other hand, *socially incompetent* behaviours are those behaviours whose implementation is *dysfunctional* within the society. Incompetent behaviours, in fact, manifest the individual's incapacity to adopt socially *functional* behaviours – which may be directly related to the individual's deficiency in properly understanding the surrounding social context, as much as its inability to properly interact with this same context (Smith, 2007, 73).

Therefore, confounding and overlapping these two notions, implies that scholars in the traditional perspective couple *socially deviant* behaviours – those behaviours deviating from social norms, thus 'socially undesirable' – with an additional connotation of *developmental deviance*, thus implying *social dysfunctionality* and *maladjustment* in the performing individual (Smith, 2007, 73).

A case in point is represented by the interpretation traditionally assigned to *aggressive* behaviours (in all its various forms), which are conceived as socially undesirable since they represent a problem for social groups. However, the main issue is that, given the founding societal concerns and engineering ethos, in the traditional perspective the observation of aggressive behaviours in children is associated to *social maladjustment*, *social incompetence* or as a reaction to *social rejection* (Smith, 2007). Implication to this is that deviant behaviours – "different from the norm or from accepted standards"⁶³ accepted by the social group – are automatically assumed being socially dysfunctional.

This all reflects the fact that the traditional perspective overlaps the society's interests – which aim at accomplishing social efficiency – with the individuals' personal interests (Smith, 2007, 73-78). Evolutionary oriented peer relations studies have proved

⁶³ Definition of 'deviant' given in the *Encarta World English Dictionary*, quoted in Smith, 2007, 78.

that the *individual benefit* may not coincide with the *social benefit* and also that there is a distinction between what is *desirable* for the society and what is actually *successful* in the social context. This because, evolutionary oriented peer relations studies have proved that the adoption of deviant/aggressive behaviour although remains socially undesirable, still it has proved to be socially functional and competent.

3.2.4 – The widespread acceptance of the traditional perspective and its contributing factors: the scientific isolation of child and psychological studies

This traditional conception, in all its components, has been influential and widely accepted until the end of the 20th century. In fact, it was only in recent times that this traditional dichotomy and incompatibility between complying and deviant behaviours – and its related association of deviant behaviours to social maladjustment and of complying behaviours to social competence – has been challenged both theoretically and empirically, thus opening the way to the articulation of a revised perspective on the relation between deviant and complying behaviours (Smith, 2007, 65).

In investigating and retracing the factors that contributed to the widespread acceptance of the traditional perspective, it is possible to identify both the abovementioned social engineering ethos informing child studies and also a long lasting "concern to establish child psychology as a scientific discipline in its own right" (Smith, 2007, 76) which implied an extended isolation of child studies from other disciplines. In fact, both Peter Smith (2007, 74-77) and Parke⁶⁴ (2004), highlight the role played by this protracted isolation of the child psychology discipline, and conclude that this "eagerness to achieve respectability as a science" (Parke, 2004, 4; quoted in Smith, 2007, 76) kept child psychology away from cross-disciplinary insights deriving, for example, from evolutionary thinking, sociological thinking, and developmental psychology – which "might have helped produce a broader and more reflective perspective on this ideological context" (Smith, 2007, 76; Parke, 2004, 4).

⁶⁴ Ross Parke (2004), writing about the 70 years of the SRCD (Society for Research in Child Development), reviews the decades going from 1943 until 1963 (Smith, 2007, 76).

Proof of this – as mentioned above and as will be further developed in the upcoming sections – is the fact that it is only when child psychology and sociology were finally compounded, under an evolutionary perspective, that challenging empirical findings emerged and as a consequence this traditional (and limited) approach was irreversibly overcome.

3.3 – Introducing the updated perspective: complexity and contextual interactions in the status–behaviour relations.

The traditional perspective began to be challenged when scholars found evidence showing that "aggressive behaviour can, in some contexts, be associated with popularity status, social skills and social competence"⁶⁵ (Smith, 2007, 65).

In the wake of the two 1998 publications and responding to the "wake-up call" that consequently reached developmental psychologists, different studies focussing on the relationships between aggression, likeability and popularity found further confirmation of the idea that aggressiveness has its (contextual) social role and functionality.

⁶⁵ It is not only on the bases of empirical findings that one can challenge the traditional assumption that equates deviant (aggressive) behaviours with social maladjustment and incompetence, but also by making some parallels with other theories. In fact, Peter Smith (2007) reports some theoretical arguments that question this assumption. Developments in *evolutionary theory* suggest that, though the related levels of risk, aggressive behaviour is still *adaptive* to the process of evolution, "or else it would not have been selected" (Smith, 2007, 70).

Both simple and more sophisticated models developed by applying game theory analysis to animal behaviour help to understand that, given the import role played by the social context itself, "a 'competent' or 'well-adapted' animal will certainly have aggressive behavior within its repertoire" so to be able to better adapt to different situations. In fact, when Smith reports that "The most successful patterns are a mix of cooperative and competitive strategies" (Smith, 2007, 70) – this means not a combination of the two strategies within the same social context, but the possibility for the actor to alternatively select cooperative or competitive strategies as the most adapt response to different social environments (see the example on 'hawk' and 'dove' strategies in populations of doves or howks; Smith, 2007, 70). Similarly, *developmental theories within psychology* justify the presence of aggressive behaviours by relating it to the *skill development* process. This perspective sees conflict situations and aggressive behaviours as a space and moment in which individuals can develop important 'social and cognitive abilities' (Smith, 2007, 71). Critics underline that some of the skills learned are strictly related to aggressive situations only. For example, "only by engaging in fights or other forms of aggressive behaviours" one 'learns about its physical, verbal and psychological strengths and weaknesses'. However, as critics underline, the problem is that "these skills are only needed if aggression is needed" (Smith, 2007, 71). Still, in response to these critics, developmental theorists underline that aggressive situations allow to acquire a more generally valid set of skills that include the ability of "understanding social dynamics and the thoughts and emotions and likely plans of others" (Smith, 2007, 71).

Finally, Smith reports that studies about status conducted in the perspective of *sociological theories* also support the questioning of the association between aggressive deviance and maladjustment. At the basis, there is the fact that "sociologists have, more than developmental psychologists, kept apart the interests of the individual and the interests of the social group or the wider society" (Smith, 2007, 71).

The contribution given by the sociological tradition to this perspective can be identified in the 'reputation enhancement theory' which highlights the fundamental role played by the group's context in qualifying the social admissibility of aggressive behaviours. In fact, a delinquent group evaluates aggressive behaviours differently from a non-delinquent group – where "antisocial behavior might be a reason for exclusion" (Smith, 2007, 72). On the opposite, in a delinquent context, aggressive behaviours can be a reason for both social inclusion and status enhancement (Smith 2007, 72).

A further argument highlights the possibility that aggressive behaviours may – in those cases where there is no other better option – be a "rational" option. "This could be the case for youth in very disadvantaged environments; conventional career prospects are small or non-existent, and aggressive or antisocial acts may provide an alternative 'career path' that offers more promise in terms of money, prestige and opportunity" (Smith, 2007, 72). Furthermore, aggression can also be seen as a "legitimate response to oppression" (Smith, 2007, 72; see also Galtung, 1969).

For a review of the studies focussing on aggressive behaviours, it is possible to follow Mayeux and colleagues (2011). The authors focus the revision in particular on those studies that adopt sociometrics and conceive, define and measure the construct of popularity as a dimension of "social visibility, impact and prestige" (Mayeux et al., 2011, 81).

According to this revision, it is possible to identify two main tranches of research developed in response to the 1998 wake-up call. Mayeux and colleagues report that the first tranche of studies, since conducted in the immediate aftermath of the 1998-revised view, was focused mainly on verifying and identifying the presence (or absence) of relations between popularity (and/or likeability) and aggressive behaviours. More in detail, these *earliest* developmental peer relations studies arrived at identifying that aggressive behaviours ("overt and relational aggression" in this case) are negatively linked with likeability, but they are positively related to popularity – and, as reported by Mayeux et al., that the positive relationships in some cases were "quite strong" (Mayeux et al., 2011, 83; see: LaFontana, Cillessen, 1998, 1999, 2002; Lease et al., 2002; Parkhurst, Hopmeyer, 1998; Prinstein, Cillessen, 2003).

Afterwards, the subsequent tranche of research – undertaken in the beginning of the 21st century on – while confirming the previous results, focussed on providing a "more nuanced view of the links between status and aggression". This was possible partly because some of the new research was conducted with longitudinal designs (Mayeux et al., 2011, 83; see⁶⁶: Cillessen, Mayeux, 2004; de Bruyn, Cillessen, 2006; de Bruyn et al., 2009; Rose, Swensen, Waller, 2004; Sandstrom, Cillessen, 2006)⁶⁷.

Therefore, while the first tranche of studies focusses on highlighting (and replicating) the existence of a link between aggressiveness and high status, the second tranche of studies focussed on formulating an articulated explanation of this link⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ The authors also mention Hawley, Little, & Card, 2007, "which found a nonsignificant link between aggression and both forms of status" ((Mayeux et al., 2011, 83).

⁶⁷ As mentioned above, Lara Mayeux and colleagues focus specifically on those studies that conceive popularity as a dimension of social standing (characterized by visibility, prestige and impact), however, similar conclusions have been reached by other studies that have adopted "alternative measures of high status", among which is *social network centrality* (Farmer, Rodkin, 1996), or again by adopting "clustering techniques to identify two distinct groups of popular boys:" the tough boys and the model boys (Farmer et al., 2000).

⁶⁸ Similarly, Gary Ladd (2005) while retracing the evolution of scholarly research on children's peer relationships, identifies three generations of studies that are allocated from 1900 until 1940s for the first generation; while the second generation locates between 1970s and 1980s, and the third generation considers the studies developed from 1990s until present days (see Ladd, 2005).

Various studies and researchers contributed to identify the contextual elements contributing to the relation between aggressive behaviours and high status.

The next two subsections will focus on the more complex aspects of the status-behaviour link and also on the contextual role played by 'moderators' in the relation between status and behaviour.

3.3.1 – Investigating the complexity of the status–behaviour relation: functionality of aggressive behaviours in the 'social dominance process' and in the 'popularity process'

The latest studies from peer relations literature focussed on further investigating the relation between status and behaviour, and by doing so they have arrived at pointing out the existence of the so-called *popularity process* – meant as the process needed to gain or maintain popular status in the peer group.

In fact, building on the previously mentioned findings, developmental peer relations scholars moved towards a further understanding and outline of the popularity process. This second tranche of research on peer relations studies is originally inspired by the evolutionary theory and animal behaviour studies and is also built on a parallel with (previous) studies investigating the *social dominance process* – conceived as an effective control of resources and high levels of social centrality/visibility⁶⁹ (Pellegrini et al., 2011a; see also Hawley 1999a; 2002; 2003a; 2003b).

In a few words, investigating the *social dominance process* it emerges that "the most effective strategy would be a balance of prosociality and coercion" (Hawley, 2003a, 283; see also: Hawley, 1999a; 2002; 2003b). By building on these findings concerning the social dominance dimension – reached by developmental psychology at the end of 1990s (Hawley, 1999a; 1999b; 2002; 2003a) – peer researchers investigated and extended these conclusion to the dimension of popularity status.

More in detail, Pellegrini, Roseth, Van Ryzin and Solberg (2011) building on this parallel arrive at supporting that, similarly to the social dominance process, popularity involves a process which is based on a functional combination of prosociality and coercion (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124).

⁶⁹ This measure is a measure of status-rank, it indeed refers to the social position/status of an individual with regard to the other individuals of the peer group.

For both processes, this combination of behaviours has been labelled as *bistrategic combination* and its implementers – recalling the studies on social dominance – have been referred to as *bistrategic resource controllers*⁷⁰, or also as *Machiavellians*⁷¹, (Pellegrini et al., 2011a; Pellegrini, 2008; Hawley 1999a; 2002; 2003a; 2003b).

(I) – The parallel between the social dominance process and the popularity process

Pellegrini and colleagues are confident in tracing a parallel between the two processes since both *popularity* and *social dominance* are two types (two forms) of *social status*⁷²; and in particular since their work is built on the conceptualization of popularity as "a form of social dominance"⁷³ (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124). More in detail, *social dominance* is conceived as a type of social status that is characterized by 'peer group centrality and control of social resources'⁷⁴ (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124) and *popularity* is conceived as "a dimension of social standing that is characterized by visibility, prestige, and status with peers"⁷⁵ (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 123).

⁷⁰ Referring to those children or adolescents who, by adopting a combination of prosocial and antisocial behaviours, are able to effectively control resources in the peer group (Hawley, 2003a; Pellegrini 2011).

⁷¹ Patricia Hawley (2003a) recalls the name of the Italian political philosopher of the Renaissance who investigated the most effective power strategies adopted by Italian states to gain positions in the Italian states' system of the Renaissance period. While the name of Machiavelli is commonly associated to "images of manipulation and deceit" (Hawley, 2003a, 282), Hawley herself clearly states that "Machiavelli's name is invoked here because his philosophy appears to describe the behaviour of socially dominant pre-schoolers (Hawley, 2002) and adolescents (Hawley, Littler, & Pasupathi, 2002)" (Hawley, 2003a, 283). In fact, while the original outline of the bistrategic combination is actually inspired by, and builds on, evolutionary theory and animal behaviour studies, yet the confirmation in peer relations studies that "the most effective strategy would be a balance of prosociality and coercion" somehow recalls the conclusions achieved by Machiavelli while observing the interactions of Italian states in Renaissance (Hawley, 2003a, 283).

⁷² They both are related to dimensions of 'social standing' and refer to the individual's social ranking in the social hierarchy of its peer group.

⁷³ Pellegrini and colleagues focus on studies that "link aggression with popularity, conceptualized as a form of social dominance" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124).

⁷⁴ Pellegrini and colleagues define social dominance as a process which is related to popularity and "that is the product of naturally occurring differences in *resource control status* among members of the group" (emphasis added – Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 123; see also: de Waal, 1986; Hawley, 1999a; Pellegrini, 2008). In this definition 'resource control status' refers to the status (the rank among peers) that an individual has in relation to its ability/capacity to control social resources. Therefore, social dominance refers specifically to the social status (social rank) that an individual is assigned in relation to its access to resource control.

⁷⁵ Moreover, both popularity and social dominance are associated to physical and relational aggressive behaviours (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, Pellegrini 2008; Hawley, 2003a; 2002; 1999a). In fact, Pellegrini and colleagues organize their work by focussing around the 'role of aggression in social dominance and popularity' (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124).

Building on the results of the studies on social dominance⁷⁶ (Hawley, 2003a, 283; Pellegrini 2008), and focussing on the functional role of coercive behaviours both in social dominance and popularity, Pellegrini and colleagues support that,

"Research that is influenced by an evolutionary orientation has explained the functional dimensions of aggression in terms of social dominance. According to this work, a combination of aggressive and affiliative strategies predicts peer group centrality and control of social resources [dimensions of social dominance]. We suggest that popularity involves similar processes, reflecting a behavioural style that simultaneously incorporates prosocial skills and effective use of aggression" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124).

The key implication of these findings for the field of developmental psychology itself is represented by the groundbreaking affirmation of the functional and adaptive role of aggressive/coercive behaviours. In fact, the assertions advanced by Pellegrini and his colleagues directly challenged the traditional perspective that used to contrast "dimensions of peer affiliation, such as cooperative behavior, peer group centrality, and popularity [...] with aggression" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124).

It is since the end of 1990s – since when evolutionary-oriented psychology and peer relations studies have begun to focus on understanding the "associations between aggression and popularity"⁷⁷ – that,

"Accumulating evidence from this research indicates that aggression is *positively* related to dimensions of peer status indicative of social prominence and visibility" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124).

While findings confirming the functional role of aggressive/deviant behaviours are important to this research, still the key element emerging from this conceptualization of the popularity process is precisely represented by the need for a combination of the two behaviours (prosocial and coercive). Moreover, this is also strengthened by further findings achieved in social dominance studies which have

⁷⁶ The authors also build on Schwartz, Gorman, 2011.

⁷⁷ Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124. On peer relations studies see: Cillessen, Mayeux, 2004; Hawley et al., 2007; Rodkin et al., 2000; Schwartz et al., 2006. On evolutionary oriented psychology see: Cairns et al., 1988; Hawley, 1999a; Pellegrini 2008; Vaughn, Santos, 2007).

shown that the implementation of only one of the two strategies (prosociality or coercion) are not able or not sufficient to result in social dominance status.

Therefore, combination is necessary in order to seek for higher status (being it popularity status or social dominance status). If used alone/separately (coercive controller or prosocial controller) the two strategies result in social status that is not social dominance (Hawley, 2003a).

(II) – Reporting on the evolution of the dominance process: reformulation of the social dominance process

Social dominance in its traditional conception has been formulated in terms of competition for resource control. In fact, under the traditional perspective, social dominance has been associated to competitive and coercive strategies implemented in order to gain access to social resources. The ratio at the basis was that, being resources limited, individuals must compete (within-group competition) for these resources, so that the strategies implemented in order to obtain access to and control of the limited resources are competitive and coercive – since they allow direct and immediate access to the contended resources.

"Despite the clear advantages of living and coordinating with others, the fact that resources are limited necessitates within-group competition"⁷⁸ (Hawley, 1999a, 100). Therefore, under this traditional perspective, predictors of resource control are competitive and coercive behaviours/strategies (Hawley, 1999a, 168).

The traditional formulation was in line with studies on animal behaviour, it also had its extent of explanation of human behaviour, however, as highlighted by Hawley (1999a), while it was able to explain pre-scholar children's behaviour, it was not able to explain more adult behaviour which was not in line with a tendency of assertive competition among peers. Daily evidence induced scholars to reflect on the fact that individuals in their adult life tend to avoid aggressive/coercive behaviour – since socially sanctioned, or at least not recommended (see Hawley, 1999a).

This is way, on these basis, and by adopting an evolutionary developmental perspective, Hawley (1999a, 99) advances the need to renovate the theoretical and

⁷⁸ Hawley makes reference to Darwin (1859).

measurement paradigms of social dominance so that they can reflect specific/peculiar human social and cognitive abilities – this because animal behaviour theories are not able to take into consideration the role of cooperative/prosocial behaviour. Therefore, the first step was made by scholars in the direction of challenging the exclusive link that traditionally associated the attainment of social dominance, and the control of social resources with competitive and coercive strategies only.

With the intent to find a solution to these shortcomings in the literature, Hawley adopts a strategy-based perspective (Hawley, 1999a, 99): she defines social dominance as "differential ability to control resources–without reference to how this is done" (Hawley, 1999a, 99). This opens the way for the author to outline an open-ended investigation of all the possible different strategies adopted by individuals (children) to compete with their peers (Hawley, 1999a, 99), being them coercive or prosocial.

In more practical terms, this implied reformulating and defining social dominance in terms of 'variability of access to social resources' – "differential ability to control resources" – without making any *a priori* reference to how this attainment of resource control status is accomplished. This reopens the possibility to investigate and understand the effective processes that bring to status gaining (Hawley, 1999a, 97; Hawley 2002).

As reported by Hawley (2002 168; 1999a; 1999b), this change of perspective mirrors a shift from a structural to a functional approach, focussing firstly on the ends and from there investigating how those ends are reached, with which means and thanks to which strategies.

This evolution of perspective, was supported by increasing evidence showing that "both prosocial and coercive behaviours are related to resource control" (Hawley, 1999a, 97). Moreover, both these strategies adoptable to gain resource control, were also associated with social competence⁷⁹.

The result is that Hawley in 1999(a) by surpassing the traditional conception that related social dominance to coercive strategies only, advances and supports that

⁷⁹ In the study presented by Hawley in 1999(a), the rating of social competence is made by parents (see: Hawley, 1999a).

competition for resources can be also implemented by performing 'prosocial' behaviours⁸⁰. Next to this, in 2002, Hawley by directly addressing the predictors of social dominance and by investigating the strategies used by children to control resources, finds that both prosocial and coercive behaviours are related to resource control (Hawley, 2002).

Further, association between resource control and both prosocial and coercive strategies, furtherly investigated, proved that the most effective strategy to gain high status in social dominance is a combination of the two strategies.

Patricia Hawley, in 2003(a) publishes the results of her open-ended study which aims at collecting the qualification of the characteristics associated to "children who varied in their use of coercive (aggressive) and prosocial (cooperative) strategies of resource control" (Hawley, 2003a; 279). This study is done by addressing a sample of 1700 children, and collects the qualification through self-reported and other-reported qualification of the characteristics.

Considering that strategies of resource control are coercive and prosocial strategies, the study classifies children according to their use of these two possible strategies. In fact, based on a self-reported classification of the use of coercive and prosocial strategies of resource control, children of the sample were categorized as⁸¹ *coercive controllers* (predominantly coercive strategy), *prosocial controllers* (predominantly prosocial strategy), *bistrategic controllers* (using both coercive and prosocial strategies)⁸².

⁸⁰ Literature on social competence "suggests that successful individuals achieve personal goals while maintaining positive relationships" (Hawley, 2002, 167). Next to this, social dominance literature presents resource control as a central personal goal. Therefore, challenging the traditional perspective, "although aggression and coercion may be one means to attain these goals [resource control], the theoretical biology literature suggests that prosociality may also be a means to this end.

⁸¹ Next to these categories the authors also uses *noncontrollers* (predominantly none of the strategies), or *typicals* (majority of children which fall in between cutoff points).

⁸² Moving from the traditional perspective according which "positive and negative behaviours are often considered diametrical opposites in the developmental and risk literature" (279). This because, "aggressive behavior has been traditionally considered an indicator of psychological or behavioural maladaptation. Aggression is associated with peer rejection (Coie & Dodge, 1998; Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990), risk-taking behaviour (Brook & Newcomb, 1995), low educational achievement (Brook & Newcomb, 1995), and unemployment (Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1987; Kokko, & Pulkkinen, 2000). Most developmental approaches to aggression preclude the possibility that aggression may be associated with social competence" (279-289). Applying an evolutionary perspective to studies of developmental psychology (focussed on aggression – see Hawley, 2003a, 281-282).

The classification of children by resource control strategy is made "by using cutoff points on the dimensions of self-reported prosocial and coercive strategies (see Hawley et al., 2002)". More in detail, the children that self-reports a score "above the 66th percentile for one strategy and below the 66th percentile for the other", is considered as using

Hawley in her 2003(a) publication demonstrated that, among the categories of *coercive controllers* and *prosocial controllers*, it was the category of *bistrategic controllers* (Machiavellian) the one which resulted in a 'highly effective resource controller who is also able to command a great deal of attention [social centrality] from the group' (Hawley, 2003a, 283).

Indeed, results found that bistrategic controllers, "emerged as possessing positive and negative characteristics and, despite their aggression, Machiavellians were socially central, liked by peer, socially skilled, and well adjusted" (Hawley, 2003a, 279).

More in detail, discussing the findings, Hawley (2003a, 298) reports that at first glance results of patterns of correlations seem to reiterate traditional and well-known results in line with the idea according which "all good things go together" (Hawley, 2003a, 298). In fact, by looking at bivariate correlations, it emerges that "prosocial strategies are generally associated with positive characteristics (e.g., agreeableness, conscientiousness, social skills) while coercive behavior is associated with negative characteristics (e.g., aggression and hostility)" (Hawley, 2003a, 298).

However, a turning point in the results is represented by the fact that, contrary to traditional expectations, both positive and negative characteristics (conscientiousness, social self-concept, positive affect, popularity, peer rejection) are not correlated with specific resource control strategies. This is to say that, on the one hand,

"coercive control is not related to conscientiousness, social self-concept, positive affect, popularity nor peer rejection, even though common sense or social skills deficit perspective would suggest negative correlations should emerge" (Hawley, 2003a, 298-299).

And similarly, on the other hand, prosocial control is not correlated to positive characteristics only. In this way, the bivariate correlation that separately associated positive characteristics with prosocial strategy and negative characteristics with coercive

"predominantly [that] one strategy and is classified as such": *prosocial controller* (>66th percentile for prosocial and <66th percentile for coercive) or *coercive controller* (>66th percentile for coercive and <66th percentile for prosocial). In line with this, *bistrategic controller* categorizes the children whose self-classification of resource control strategies "lie[s] above the 66th percentiles for both strategies". Similarly, *noncontrollers* (or *subordinates*) are those "children scoring below the 33rd percentile on both [strategies]". Finally, children classified as *typicals* when are those children which "fall in between". This category contains 'most of the children' and is also used as a "fitting comparison group" (Hawley, 2003a, 283).

strategy loses its descriptive capacity and deprives scholars of the traditional analytical framework.

"A child's score on these variables [conscientiousness, social self-concept, positive affect, popularity, peer rejection] cannot be predicted based on knowing the degree to which he or she employs coercive strategies. Nor can one speak to a child's hostility or tendency to cheat by knowing his or her employment of prosocial strategies because these variables are uncorrelated as well" (Hawley, 2003a, 298-299).

The results and implication of this blurring of the traditional correlations, is that, by adopting a typological approach, "[a] clearer and more complex pattern emerges" (Hawley, 2003a, 299). More in detail,

"A sizeable subgroup of children who report themselves to be aggressive, and who are seen as such by their peers, enjoy positive characteristics and positive outcomes if their coercion is balanced by prosociality. That is, aggression and deception can be associated with positive outcomes" (Hawley, 2003a, 299).

These final results prove that children classified as bistrategic controllers (since adopting both prosocial and coercive strategies), in self-reported evaluations do "admit that they are aggressive (the most aggressive), claim to be hostile, and confess that they cheat in school [⁸³]" . At the same time this qualification is confirmed by peers in peer-reported evaluation. In fact, "Peers also cast them in a similar light and report them to be the most aggressive children in the schoolyard [⁸⁴]" . However, and here lies the emerging complex pattern, these same children that feature negative characteristics and behaviour also qualify as "effective, socially central and are reasonably well liked [⁸⁵]" .

The implication is that the combination of 'getting along' and 'getting ahead' is an effective combination for bistrategic controllers who are able to both access resources (accomplishment of resource control) and to maintain, to be assigned with a recognized high social status (accomplishment of social centrality).

⁸³ See Figure 2 in Hawley 2003a.

⁸⁴ See Figure 4 in Hawley, 2003a.

⁸⁵ See Figure 5 in Hawley, 2003a.

In this way, bistrategic controllers (only) are able to accomplish both the two strands of social dominance status, power and social status (resource control and social centrality).

In fact, when looking at the results related to children that are classified as coercive controllers (Hawley, 2003a, 299) it emerges that while they share with bistrategic controllers the negative characteristics – in fact both are pointed out as aggressive, cheaters and hostile – "Yet the coercive controllers lack key attributes that may distinguish the skilled from the unskilled (i.e., agreeableness, social skills, and conscientiousness; [⁸⁶])" (Hawley, 2003a, 299). On the contrary, bistrategic controllers are qualified by both peers and by teachers as skilful, coercive controllers lack prosocial attributes related to social skills.

Considering this difference as attribution of social skills abilities, together with the fact that bistrategic controllers "rate themselves supreme on effective resource control [⁸⁷]" then, "it should come as no surprise that bistrategic children enjoy a higher than average social self-concept and positive affect" (Hawley, 2003a, 300).

A similar reasoning is valid when distinguishing between bistrategic controllers and prosocial controllers. The first distinction between the two refers to the characteristics of behaviour, in fact, as distinct from bistrategic controls who behave also coercively ("badly"), "In contrast, the prosocial controllers stand out as the most agreeable, socially skilled, and conscientious [⁸⁸]" (Hawley, 2003a, 300).

Therefore, in conclusion, Hawley arrives at demonstrating that, with regard to resource control and social dominance *status* the identified compresence of both strategies is more than a simple co-occurrence. Indeed, it is a functional combination which allows to accomplish both components of social dominance status: (1) effective access to resources (resource control) and (2) recognition of high status by the peers of the group (score high in social centrality and attention by the group).

⁸⁶ See Figure 1 in Hawley, 2003a.

⁸⁷ See Figure 3 in Hawley, 2003a.

⁸⁸ See Figure 1 in Hawley, 2003a.

(III) – From social dominance to popularity: the popularity process

The outline of the popularity process is achieved by Pellegrini and his colleagues through a parallel with the process of *social dominance*.

Defining popularity as "a dimension of social standing that is characterized by visibility, prestige, and status with peers", social dominance is conceived as "the product of naturally occurring differences in resource-control status among members of a group" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 123). Looking at both social elements with an evolutionary perspective', the authors identify that popularity and social dominance "are linked though a common foundation in the strategic use of aggression" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a).

Studies on social dominance, undertaking an evolutionary orientation have highlighted the *functional role* played by aggressive behaviours in (effectively) gaining the control of resources in social groups. Therefore, the evolutionary perspective was useful also with specific regard to 'popularity', since it allowed to challenge the traditional assumption that associated deviant aggressive behaviours to "social cognitive deficits" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 123).

Indeed, as mentioned above, these findings furtherly challenge the traditional perspective concerning the role of deviant behaviours within society in both its essential features. Indeed, in the first case, the assumed incompatibility between deviant and complying behaviours is overturned by evidence of a higher adaptiveness of the bistrategic combination of alternative behaviours⁸⁹. Next to this, also the second component of the traditional perspective – according to which aggressive behaviours (and, more generally, socially deviant/antisocial behaviours) are not part of the range of socially competent and functional behavioural options – is waved by the confirmed social adaptiveness and functionality of deviant behaviours.

⁸⁹ Variability in the levels of adaptiveness of deviant behaviours has also been found with regard to the types/ forms of aggressive behaviour adopted. Indeed, though taking into consideration that physical aggression loses its predictive capacity on popularity status, still it is possible to report that "Relational aggression embedded in a larger behavioral repertoire that also includes prosocial behaviors is expected to be the most effective" (Puckett et al., 2008, 565; quoted in: Mayeux et al., 2011, 84). See Mayeux et al., 2011.

(IV) – Different behavioural strategies for different social goals

The clear distinction between types of status (likeability and popularity status) and its related behavioural strategies has allowed Julie Aikins and Scott Litwack (2011) arrive at some of the most interesting research findings that relate behavioural strategies to social goals. Indeed, by connecting the constructs of *likeability* and *popularity* to the concept of *social competences* – defined as "discrete behaviors that lead children to solve social tasks or achieve social success" (Bukowski, Parker, 1998, 644; Aikins, Litwack, 2011, 141) – the Aikins and Litwack study shows that different social competences are required to achieve one or the other of the two social statuses (accepted status/likeability vs popular status).

Departing from the traditional perspective and building on the most recent findings of peer relation studies, the two scholars show that on the one side, likeability (social acceptance) results being strongly linked to prosocial attitudes. Indeed, directly quoting them, "Behavioral attributes that may be part of this conceptualization are prosociability, assertiveness, self-control, and successful peer group entry" (Aikins, Litwack, 2011, 141). On the other hand, the most popular individuals result being "less attentive to group dynamics and enter in a manner that calls attention to themselves, their thoughts, and their interests" (Aikins, Litwack, 2011, 143).

In other words, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and more in general social deviance are part of the antisocial competences associated to the behaviours of the most popular kids.

Under this perspective, antisocial competences implemented next to prosocial competences are suggestive neither of 'social maladjustment' nor of 'peer rejection' (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2004, 147, 160). Conversely, they are indicative of behaviours that are socially recognized and accepted as functional for the achievement of popularity status.

Summing up, the relevant point emerging from Aikins and Litwack's 2011 publication is that – although it is neither 'absolute' nor unconditional – it is possible to identify a link relating likeability (social acceptance) to prosocial behaviours, and popularity to both prosocial and antisocial behaviours.

Building on this, it is possible to conclude that aiming at popularity and aiming at likeability (social acceptance) implies aiming at 'two different social goals' (Aikins,

Litwack, 2011, 150), which require different behavioural strategies. Indeed, when aiming at being highly liked or highly popular, one must implement specific social competences which differ from one aim to the other: empirical evidence suggests prosocial behaviours when aiming at social acceptance, and a combination of prosocial and antisocial behaviours when aiming at gaining (or maintaining) popular status. Therefore, fundamental implication to this is that deviant/antisocial behaviours can be considered as *social instruments* available to individuals in order for them to address their social goals and social statuses in acquiring popularity status. Thus, the updated perspective uncouples the association of deviant behaviours with social maladjustment and social incompetence.

(V) – The higher adaptiveness of bistrategic combination of behaviours

Aggressiveness is neither presented nor suggested as being social adaptive and competent *per se* but rather in specific contexts and combinations (Smith, 2007). Indeed, aggressiveness is found being more effective when paired with prosocial behaviours – in a *bistrategic* combination – rather than when it is adopted singularly. Indeed, Hawley herself defines it "*most adaptive* if it is paired with more-prosocial behaviours" (Mayeux et al., 2011, 84; Hawley, 2003). A few years later, perfectly in line with these findings and further refining them, Marissa Puckett, Julie Wargo Aikins and Antonius Cillessen (2008), when studying a sample of middle school students, determined that

"relationally aggressive adolescents who were also high on leadership, cooperation, peer sociability, and social self-efficacy were *more popular* than their relationally aggressive peers who did not possess these qualities"⁹⁰ (Mayeux et al., 2011, 84; Puckett et al., 2008).

The above implies that a combination of prosocial and antisocial behaviours proves more adaptive than the sole implementation of antisocial (aggressive) behaviours. Insisting on the point, Mayeux quotes Puckett asserting that "Relational aggression embedded in a larger behavioral repertoire that also includes prosocial behaviors is expected to be the most effective" (Puckett et al., 2008, 565; quoted in:

⁹⁰ Emphases added.

Mayeux et al., 2011, 84). Therefore, students adopting combinations of pro- and antisocial behaviours perform better in popularity than do those students who implement exclusively aggressive behaviours.

Therefore, the most recent findings achieved by peer relation scholars have disclosed empirical evidence asserting the *functionality* and *adaptiveness* of aggressive/deviant behaviours when related to status-seeking of popularity status. Next to the proven functionality of deviant behaviours, peer relations studies have also found results confirming the higher adaptiveness of a bistrategic combination of deviant and complying behaviours.

Yet, both for social dominance and for popularity process, this *functionality* depends from various factors among which the type of status considered (e.g. aggression is not functional to likeability) and other factors. As reported by Pellegrini and colleagues,

"Accumulating evidence from this research indicates that aggression is *positively* related to dimensions of peer status indicative of social prominence and visibility. The role of aggression in enhancing or diminishing peer status depends on what dimension of status is considered on several other factors, including the form of the aggression (proactive vs. reactive), the co-occurrence of affiliative behaviours such as cooperation and reconciliation with the aggression, the type of social situation involved (contest vs. scramble competition), school transitions, and the history of the peer group in which the aggression takes place" (Pellegrini, 2011, 124).

The next section will focus on a closer analysis of the role played by the moderators identified in the peer relations literature (Pellegrini et al., 2011a; Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007).

3.3.2 – Introducing the findings on the contextual interactions in the status-behaviour relations

The more recent perspective (evolutionary oriented) focuses on understanding the empirical findings which highlight an existing association between aggressive behaviours and popularity/reputational status (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124-125). The results confirm that there are several factors interacting and moderating the relation between status and behaviour.

Among these factors, the most prominent one is (I) the role played by the type of social status which the actor is aiming at. Indeed, the variation in the type of status (popularity or likeability) strongly affects the status-behaviour relation. Next to this, the role of aggressive behaviours in "enhancing or diminishing peer status depends on several other factors" ⁹¹ (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124).

Indeed, another moderating factor is identified in (II) the type of aggressive behaviours which are adopted. Indeed, aggressive behaviours are classified as *physical* or *relational* aggression types, and again as *proactive* or *reactive* forms of aggression (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007). Moreover, it is also possible to report on the moderating role identified for (III) the co-occurrence (or their absence) of affiliative behaviours such as cooperation and reconciliation, when implemented in concomitance with the occurrence of aggression.

Other possible moderators have been identified in (IV) "the type of social situation involved" being it an interaction context characterized by a *contest* or a *scramble* competition. Next to this, scholars have also identified (V) the moderating effects of *time* and *age* on social interactions – which are assessed (a) by focussing on *school transitions* (passages from one primary to middle and middle to high-school); (b) by observing the continuation of the social interaction – by observing "the history of the peer group in which the aggression takes place" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 124); and (c) by taking into consideration longitudinal observations of children behaviour (in the case of age).

The next subsections will focus on a closer understanding of these elements. All the following observations and conclusions refer to studies which investigate the

⁹¹ Next to these moderators, studies focussed on children and adolescents have also been focussed on the role played by 'gender' and 'age' as well (see Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 147-153). These two moderators are not considered in this research because of their little contribution to IR literature, however, it is possible to report that in general the studies on children/adolescents have reported no significant gender differences on the functional use of aggressive behaviour, though some gender-related differences have been identified on the preference of the type of aggression adopted.

Equally interesting is also the relation between age, aggression and status. Literature on children and adolescents identifies a complex variation in this relation. Simplifying a bit, it is possible to report that, with time (along the years) relational aggression (see types of aggression) is associated with low levels of likeability status (dislike); while physical aggression has proven to lose "its power to predict who is disliked and rejected by peers" (for more details see Cillessen, Mayeux (2007, 150). While when addressing age, aggression and popularity status, it has emerged that both physical and relational aggression are associated to popularity, along the years. See Cillessen, Mayeux (2007, 147-153).

process of accessing/gaining reputational status (being it popularity or social dominance)⁹².

(I) – The status-behaviour link according to differences in the type of status

Along this third chapter, this issue has already been dealt with in length. Putting it in a few words: the role of aggression with regard to social status depends on the type of status that is considered. Indeed, developmental psychologists have proven that aggressiveness has a positive relation with popularity, and a negative relation with the dimension of social acceptance/likeability.

More in detail, once literature on developmental psychology arrived at a clear distinction between likeability and popularity⁹³ and their (different) associations, it

⁹² Peer relational scholars of reference for the following sections, advance themselves the need for future research aimed at investigating the "distinction between accessing and maintaining control of resources" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 135). Furtherly supporting the need of further investigation, it is possible to report that the current results available on this issue seem to be contradictory. Indeed, on the one side, Pellegrini and colleagues assert that "Both theory and data suggest that different strategies are invoked" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 135). While on the other side, Mayeux and colleagues report that, "the interplay between popularity and aggression is likely bidirectional, with certain forms of aggression being used successfully by some youth to acquire popular status and that popularity then serving as an instigator for increased aggression" (Mayeux et al., 2011, 83). The meaning of these results implies that aggressiveness can be used both to gain popularity, and in the aftermath of gaining popularity to maintain the high acquired status. However, this contrasts both with results on the co-occurrence of strategies – that confirm that aggression is effective/functional for status gaining only if followed by reconciliatory strategies (see below, subsection III) and also with the results of longitudinal data–studies that report that aggression, after being highly used at the beginning of the year (when the phase of negotiation takes place), aggressive behaviours then decrease during the year (see subsection V).

Notwithstanding the discrepancy of these findings, addressing, Pellegrini's claim according to which "Both theory and data suggest that different strategies are invoked" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 135), it is possible to support that, this hypothesis suggests the need also for IR research/literature to investigate possible distinctions between status seeking strategies and status maintaining strategies. This in particular becomes relevant in the case of 'Role Theory' interpretative framework which makes no distinction between the phase of 'gaining' status and maintaining status. Supporting these insights, sociological literature on socialization process (see Long, Hadden, 1985) confirm the distinction between the 'selective' phase in which candidates are required to positively respond to the selection process, and the moment in which the candidate is accepted and enters the group's life. The two authors insist also on the possibility that in large groups, the selection process is specifically assigned to a part of the group and is conducted with specific rules. This brings to the distinction between the 'social world of socialization' (dealing with the selection process) and 'real world' of the group life and interaction. Long and Hadden highlight the 'discrepancy' that derives from this way of separately managing the selection (socialization) process. Indeed, in consequence of this, the newly accepted members, who positively accomplished the selection process and met the admission requirements, once interacting with the 'real world' of the group, are in the need of adjusting themselves to the actual rules social/interaction rules of the group (Long, Hadden, 1985).

⁹³ Distinguishing between likeability and popularity helps to understand that, while likeability constitutes an 'index of liking among the peer group', popularity is an index of "social impact, visibility, and reputation". This conception has been identified into two variants, one is a power-oriented definition of popularity status – in which popularity is considered as a "marker for social power" –, and the other relates popularity more to 'social network centrality', social connectedness, visibility and impact (see Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 144-145).

clearly emerged that "there are two forms of high status with different behavioral profiles" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 145).

Whether, with regard to high-likeability-status,

"Aggression is typically not a characteristic of well-liked children (...). Aggression was instead strongly associated with peer rejection, or sociometric unpopularity [measures of dislike]" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 144; see also Newcomb et al., 1993).

On the other side, aggression is among the features reported for high-popular children (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 144).

Therefore, in line with this, prosocial (norm conforming) behaviour emerged as predictive of high likeability. While on the opposite, the key element that allows to identify popularity's distinctiveness is the observation of deviant behaviours (investigated by focussing on the adoption and manifestation of different forms of aggression).

(II) – Forms of aggression: overt/physical vs indirect/relational, proactive vs reactive types of aggression

Another moderator of the relation between aggression and peer status is of course found in the variation of the type of implemented aggression behaviour.

It is possible to find in the developmental-psychological literature, two main distinctions of the forms of aggression: (1) the distinction between overt/physical and indirect/relational aggression and (2) the distinction between proactive and reactive forms of aggression.

Moving from the distinction between overt/physical aggression and indirect/relational aggression on the other, it is possible to report that according to the literature, "Overt/physical aggression includes behaviours such as verbal and physical assault and is stereotypically associated with boys rather than girls" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 146).

On the other side, indirect/relational aggression,

"(...) includes behaviours that are more covert and are usually aimed at harming another person's social status, friendships, or reputation (e.g. Crick, 1996). Some

behaviors classified as indirect or relational include malicious gossip, exclusion from activities and groups, and giving someone 'the silent treatment' [ignoring]" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 146).

Results confirm that 'both forms of aggression are related with low levels of likeability'. However, with regard to the relation between popularity and forms of aggression, a strong relationship has been found "between both physical/overt and relational/indirect forms of aggression and perceived popularity [aka, popularity]" (see Cillessen, Mayeux, 2004b; LaFontana, Cillessen, 2002; Parkhurst, Hopmeyer, 1998; Prinstein, Cillessen, 2003; Rose et al., 2004). Nevertheless, it also emerges that "over time physical aggression loses its power to predict who is disliked and rejected by peers" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 150). Therefore, by focussing mainly on forms of relational-aggression, it emerges that,

"Although relationally aggressive youth are typically not well-liked by their peers, they are often some of the most socially powerful and influential members of their grade and enjoy high levels of social centrality" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 146; see also, Cillessen, Mayeux, 2004b, Prinstein, Cillessen, 2003; Rodkin et al., 2000; Xie et al., 2002).

This furtherly strengthens the idea according which, when the social goal of the child is more status-oriented (than affiliation-oriented), then the child "may be impervious to the level of dislike [his/her] peers have for [him/her]" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 147; LaFontana, 2005).

Among the explanations for this strong relation it is possible to find the one advanced by Rose and her colleagues (2004) who assert that,

"relationally aggressive acts such as threatening to cut friendship ties and excluding certain peers from groups and activities allow the perpetrator to covertly rearrange the social structure of the peer group in such a way that will enhance their own status and visibility" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 146).

This instrumental and proactive use of relational aggression is also confirmed by empirical evidence, indeed Prinstein and Cillessen (2003), investigating 10th grade, find an association between popularity and the functional use of aggression ahead of social goals achievements.

More nuanced results are achieved and presented by Xie (et al., 2002) who "found that different forms of relational aggression were used at different stages of social conflict"⁹⁴, this by proving that there may be "an acute awareness of what kinds of behaviours will allow them to disrupt the social hierarchy and the balance of the affiliations within it, and use it to their own advantage" Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 147). In addition to this, and extremely interesting at the social level, is the fact that this same 'social awareness', has been found not only in 'savvy youth' but also in young preschoolers;

"[this] is amazing in itself, because it implies that even some very young children understand the nature of social power well enough to manipulate their social standing, or at least to attempt to" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 147; see also, Crick, 1997; Crick, Grotpeter, 1995).

In conclusion, savvy children aiming at social-oriented goals, understand that relational-aggression may be functional to their aim.

Focussing now on distinguishing aggression on the basis of its being *proactive* or *reactive*, it is important to report that the literature characterizes proactive aggression as an instrumental form of aggression that is used proactively by the actor 'to attain dominance'. An example is bullying behaviour used by the students 'to attain dominance as they enter a new social group' (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 127; see also Pellegrini, Bartini, 2001, Pellegrini, Bartini, Brooks, 1999; Rodkin et al., 2000). On the opposite, reactive aggression relates to behaviour usually adopted by kids who are victims of bullying behaviour and who react by adopting aggressive behaviour⁹⁵. "These youth emerge as frequent victims, provocative victims of bullying but respond aggressively when provoked" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 127).

The results of the studies focussed on the relation between these two forms of aggression and peer status, have always agreed with regard to the fact that reactive

⁹⁴ Xie and colleagues' research, confirmed that, "whereas indirect and behind the back behaviours tended to initiate conflict, more direct verbal forms of relational aggression were used to respond to it (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 146; see Xie et al., 2002).

⁹⁵ Also called as 'aggressive victims, bully victims, provocative victims (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 127; see also Schwartz, 2000).

aggression is strictly related to dislike (low levels of likeability), lack of social competence and low levels of social dominance.

An example to this can be found in Pellegrini's (et al., 2011a) focus on "person-centered analyses (e.g. von Eye & Bogat, 2006) with the intent of examining the associations among bullying, social dominance, popularity, and prosocial behavior in early adolescence" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 128). This analysis has brought to the identification of 'different clusters of bullies and socially dominant youth'. Four possible combinations emerged. On the one side, kids identified as bullies, differed between those that were high in social dominance (high-bullying/high-dominance) and those that were low in social dominance dimensions (high-bullying/low-dominance). Similarly, on the other side, kids who did not qualify as bullies (low-bullying) also distinguished between low-bullying/high-dominance and low-bullying/low-dominance.

Evidence regarding to the high-bullying/low-dominance showed that,

"The high-bullying/low-dominance group appeared to be similar to the aggressive victims found in other research (Schwartz, 2000), given that they were frequently victimized, low in proactive aggression, and relatively high in reactive aggression. Moreover, these adolescents lacked social competence, which is consistent with extant theory (Pellegrini et al., 1999). Perhaps as a result of their tendencies toward reactively aggressive behavior, the high-bullying/low-dominance group was also highly disliked and had few peer-nominated friends (e.g., Dodge, 1991)" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 128).

Implications to this are that: reactive aggression, not planned (not strategical nor functional to social gaining) results being disliked by peer members. As a consequence, those individuals that employ aggressive behaviours only, and in reactive modality, are identified as 'lacking social competences'. They do not gain social dominance.

Whether, there is agreement on the fact that there is a clear relation between reactive aggression and peer rejection (dislike), still there is not the same level of agreement on results concerning the relation between "proactive aggression and peer status" – which results being more complex.

The complexity is given by the fact that some studies have concluded that "proactively aggressive bullies may be popular only within highly aggressive peer group and less popular with other students" (see Pellegrini et al., 1999). Contrasting with this, other studies have identified the relation between popularity status and proactively aggressive children (see Rodkin et al., 2000), and more recent studies conducted on adolescents

have found "very clear positive associations between bullying and popularity, while controlling for social preference"/likeability (see Bruyn, Cillessen, 2009 – Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 127).

(III) – The co-occurrence of affiliative behaviours (cooperation and reconciliation) next to aggressive behaviours

Further factors and moderators, other than the types of status and aggression, influence the relation between popularity and social dominance. Among them peer relations and developmental scholars have identified the role played by the 'co-occurrence of aggressive and affiliative behaviours' (Pellegrini et al., 2011a; see also: Hawley, Little, 1999; Francis, 1988; Strayer, 1980). In fact,

"Over the years, numerous scholars have concluded that social dominance is not simply a matter of "toughness"; rather, children use a combination of aggressive and affiliative behaviors (such as cooperation and reconciliations) to control resources, such as toys, treats, and peer attention (Hawley, 1999; La Freniere & Charlesworth, 1983; Pellegrini, 2008; Rowe, Maughan, Worthman, Costello, & Angold, 2004; Savin-Williams, 1987; Vaughn, Vollenweider, Bost, Azria-Evans, & Snider, 2003)" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 129).

Therefore, the sole implementation of aggressive behaviours, does not result into social dominance. By referring to the previous section, it is possible to say that it results into the 'high-bullying/low-dominance' combination, which is associated with 'dislike' (low likeability) and social incompetence (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 128). Consequently, in order for aggressiveness to result into social dominance, it needs to be combined with prosocial and affiliative behaviours such as cooperation and reconciliation. Continuing with the quotation from Pellegrini and colleagues,

"Children using both of these strategies—so-called bistrategic resource controllers (e.g., Hawley, 2002)—are particularly adept in this regard and, as a consequence, enjoy increased levels of peer status, attention, and affiliation (Hawley, 2003; LaFreniere & Charlesworth, 1983; Pellegrini et al., 2007; Roseth et al., 2007)" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 129).

It would be possible to formulate an explanation to 'why aggressive behaviours alone are not sufficient for the individual to be also socially appreciated and recognized with a high social status/ranking' by recalling the twofold nature constituting the dimension of *social dominance*. Indeed, social dominance in its

updates formulation, was composed by both (1) control of resources (resources) *and* (2) social centrality in the peer group (status).

On these basis, an explanation to this can be advanced by referring to the distinction between *social dominance relationship* (which refers to dyadic encounters at the individual level of interaction) and *social dominance rank* which instead refers to the social status rank of an individual with respect to the peer group.

Moving from this, it is possible to say that in the context of a dyadic encounter, the use of aggressive behaviour may result into the possession/gain of the contended resource. Using the example of child-A and child-B contenting the use of a swing, if A pushes B, A gains the access to the swing (control of the resource). However, when moving at the level of social dominance rank (the social position of an individual in relation to the entire group), this does not positively influence A's social position.

Therefore, in order for an individual to be conferred with a high level of social status/ranking, it needs to take into consideration also the second component of the social dominance index. This second element requires social recognition (legitimization) conferred by peers, therefore it obliges individuals to take into consideration the importance of social interaction.

This tacitly implies that social consensus is fundamental for an individual to score high in both components of the social dominance index. Otherwise it would qualify high in bullying behaviour and low in social dominance.

Therefore, the conclusion implied by this is that, the exclusive adoption of aggressive behaviours decreases (negatively affects) the levels of social status – both in the case of social dominance as much as for popularity and likeability. While, in order to positively affect levels of popularity status it is necessary to combine both aggressive behaviour (to gain resources/power/control) and conciliatory behaviours (to gain social affiliation and recognition of high status – legitimization).

Moreover, Pellegrini and colleagues, commit into finding further specifications of the status-aggression relation. Indeed, as they highlight, this because "is not sufficient to invoke a trait or a combination of traits to explain the co-occurrence of aggressive and affiliative behaviors",⁹⁶ therefore it follows the necessity to better specifying the

⁹⁶ See Parten, 1933; Zaccaro, 2007.

'recognizable and systemic contextual variations in their use' (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 129).

Aiming to clarify the behavioural sequence that relates aggression to social dominance and popularity, the authors focus on three elements.

First, they build on studies investigating '*postaggressive affiliation and reconciliation*'⁹⁷ in competitive encounters'. The findings reached by these studies support that,

"The data that do exist [on studies focussed on children postaggression aggression] suggest that after dominant children use aggression to control resources in contests, they follow up with an affiliative strategy" (Pellegrini et al., 2007).

Secondly, the authors report the results obtained by two studies (Roseth, 2006; Roseth et al., 2011)⁹⁸ which "showed evidence of preschoolers' reconciliation, with postconflict affiliation occurring selectively between former opponents, even after controlling for baseline rates of affiliation during free play" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 130). In conclusion, the same studies

Results also showed that reconciliation was positively correlated with preschoolers' social dominance, supporting the view that dominant preschoolers reconcile strategically, using postconflict affiliation after winning contests as a way of keeping defeated peers as affiliates or simply so the latter will not defame them to peers or adults" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 130).

Implications at the group level: reconciliation allows interpersonal competition (adoption of aggressive behaviours at the level of individual interaction) while permitting the group to maintain its cohesion at the group level⁹⁹.

Finally, the third and last specification of the aggression–status relation, builds on studies that investigate "who, in the course of conflict resolution, initiated and who

⁹⁷ Most of the literature on 'postaggression reconciliation' has been conducted on nonhuman primates (see, Aureli, Cords, van Schaik, 2002; de Waal, 2000). However, though lesser, still some studies have been conducted also on children as well (see, Pellegrini et al., 2007; Roseth, 2006; Roseth et al., 2011).

⁹⁸ Both studies adopt the 'post-conflict-matched control method', developed by de Waal and Yoshihara (1983), and used in order to verify that "If postconflict affiliation is to be linked convincingly to the preceding aggressive bout, it must also be shown that affiliation occurs more often after competitive conflict than during free play and that it occurs selectively between former opponents (de Waal, 2000)" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 130).

⁹⁹ "At the group level, these results support the view that combining coercive resource control with reconciliation increases group-level cohesion by bringing former opponents together more often than occurs in the absence of competitive bouts (de Waal, 1986, 2000). In other words, reconciliation allows interpersonal competition, even coercive, aggressive forms, to enhance peer affiliation by allowing peers to negotiate interpersonal conflict while avoiding alienation (de Waal, 2000; Pellegrini, 2008; Pellegrini et al., 2007; Roseth, 2006)" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 130).

responded to reconciliatory attempts" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a; 2011b¹⁰⁰). Results assert that dominant children tend to both initiate reconciliation and to respond to other's reconciliation¹⁰¹ with a predominance of the first option. Therefore, these results – consistent with previous research (see Sutton et al., 1999) – allow to assert that: "Dominant children appear to be likely to initiate reconciliations, perhaps reflecting their strategic use of prosocial behaviors for resolution of conflicts" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131).

Moreover, "The results also showed that initiating reconciliation after dominance bouts paid dividends in terms of liking by peers¹⁰²" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131).

In conclusion,

"These findings support the claim that high-status children tend to combine aggressive resource-control behaviors with initiating reconciliations with defeated peers to attenuate damage done to their peer status associated with using aggression"¹⁰³ (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131).

In conclusion, it is possible to report that, similarly to the case of forms of aggression¹⁰⁴ also in this case it seems that proactive behaviour is perceived as an appropriate behaviour for highly socially dominant and popular children¹⁰⁵, while missing proactivity seems to downgrade the social status in the peer group.

¹⁰⁰ Disclaimer: in cases where 'Pellegrini et al., 2011' is quoted or referred to without specifying "a" or "b", the reference/quotation refers to Pellegrini et al., 2011a.

¹⁰¹ "Both dominance measures were significantly and positively correlated with initiating postcontest reconciliations (r 's = .44 and .56, respectively) and with responding to others' reconciliations (r 's = .35 and .40, respectively). The different magnitudes of these correlations favored the relation between dominance and initiating reconciliations over dominance and responding to reconciliations" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 130-131).

¹⁰² "Initiating reconciliations was significantly correlated with social acceptance (r = .30), but responding to reconciliations was not. Correspondingly, responding to reconciliations was significantly correlated with peer rejection (r = .40), but initiating reconciliations was not" (Pellegrini et al., 2011, 131).

¹⁰³ These studies are conducted on preschoolers, but authors extend their conclusions to adolescence as well (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131).

¹⁰⁴ See above, section IV – forms of aggression.

¹⁰⁵ Though this association is to be better confirmed, see section "(II) – Forms of aggression: overt/physical vs indirect/relational, and proactive vs reactive aggression" (above).

(IV) – The type of social situation involved: contest vs. scramble competition

Among the moderators that contribute to enhance or diminish the impact of aggression on levels of peer status, peer relations literature has also identified the role played by the social contest. In particular, the literature has identified two forms of competition which "predict variations in aggressive and affiliative behaviors to access resources", they are: *scramble competition* and *contest competition* (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131).

With regard to the first one, *scramble competition* corresponds to a situation in which,

"resources are abundantly present to the extent that all group members get a share (Parker, 2000). Consequently, group members use "low-cost" affiliative strategies, such as cooperation, to access resources (Pellegrini, 2008; Pellegrini et al., 2007)" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131).

On the opposite, a *contest competition* corresponds to a situation in which the contended resources are limited, therefore in this social context "there are winners and losers, and the winners can 'take all'" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131).

Literature asserts that in the case of *scramble competition*, being resources 'abundant and cheap', adopting aggression (that is a 'costly strategy') is not an efficient strategy since, given its high costs, its "risks of injury and social sanction overweight its benefits" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131). While, in situations of contest competition, "aggression is more likely than cooperation because it is more likely to 'pay off'", this because the high costs of this strategy are payed off by the high value associated to the contended resources (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131; see also: Parker, 2000; Pellegrini, 2008; Pellegrini et al., 2007).

Reviewing relevant studies with regard to behaviour strategies in scramble and contest competitions, and behavioural predictors of social dominance (Pellegrini et al., 2007; Tarullo et al., 2003), the authors conclude that,

"children's observed cooperative behavior predicted access to resources in scramble competitions but not in contest competitions. (...) These results support the view that scramble competitions elicit more affiliation than aggression, whereas the reverse might be true for contest competitions. They also support the idea that peers' positive regard for successful resource control may be attributed to the strategic combination of prosocial and coercive strategies in different competitive contexts" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 132).

These findings are also confirmed by studies focussed on situations of contest competition in which boys compete for the access to opposite-sex relationships¹⁰⁶ (see Charlesworth, 1988; Low, 2000; Pellegrini Bartini, 2001; Bukowski et al., 2000; Pellegrini, Long, 2007) and also by studies focussed on girls' interactions in transition from middle to high school¹⁰⁷ (see Cillessen, Mayeux, 2004). School transition is relevant to both types of studies (see Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 132).

(V) –The dynamic context: investigating the moderating effects of 'time' and 'age' on the status–behaviour relation

Developmental scholars focussed on peer relations, have underlined the importance of not limiting observations to single episodes, indeed "it seems too simple to treat social behaviors as isolated variables impacting an outcome" (Pellegrini et al., 2011, 135; Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007). Instead, taking into consideration the dynamicity of social interaction context better allows to "understand the meaning and function of a behavior". Scholars aiming at this, must begin to examine sequences of behavior within the dynamic social and behavioral contexts in which they occur, and not simply as summary variables aggregated across time" (Pellegrini et al., 2011, 135; Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007).

For example, as emerged in the case of combination of aggressive with reconciliatory strategies,

"As demonstrated with observations of preschoolers, aggression may be used initially to access resources in contests, but within a few minutes the winners of these contests affiliate with their peers, often initiating reconciliations with them" (Pellegrini et al., 2011, 135).

This is why separately observing each single episode may not allow to gather a comprehensive understating of socially interactive processes, which is dynamic.

In order to positively respond to this issue, both Pellegrini and colleagues and also Cillessen and Mayeux, have built their studies on dynamic models (sequences of behaviour) developed with longitudinal data (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 135; see Long,

¹⁰⁶ "[B]oys' aggression predicted their being nominated by girls to a hypothetical party" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 132).

¹⁰⁷ "[G]irls' use of relational aggression before the transition from middle to high school predicted their higher popularity status in the first year of high school" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 132).

Pellegrini, 2003). Indeed, it is longitudinal data that allow to investigate both the role played by time and age on the status behaviours link.

The moderating role of 'time' has been assessed by focussing on two specific cases: (a) in the beginning of the social interaction, and (b) along its continuation. More in detail, the moderating role played by time in the beginning of a social interaction has been assessed by focussing on observations of peer-to-peer interaction in situations of *school transitions* ("from primary to middle school and from middle to high school"). While the moderating role played by time on the continuation of the social interaction has been assessed by focussing on observations of the entire school-year – in order to investigate the "history of group formation" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 133-134).

Next to time, the last part of this section will also focus on (c) specific observations of 'age' and its effects on status-behaviour link.

(a) With regard to school transitions observations (see, Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007; Pellegrini, Long, 2001; Savin-Williams, 1987), results confirm that there is an increase of aggression in the passage (transition) to a new school, which decreases along the year. Moreover, in the cases of studies conducted both on preschoolers (Pellegrini et al., 2007; Roseth et al., 2007; Roseth et al., 2011) and also on adolescents (Savin-Williams, 1987; Pellegrini, 2008) it was found that in both cases,

"[the] use of aggression during such transitions is an important predictor of social reputation. From this perspective, it is probably the case that aggression is strategically used to establish dominance in new social groupings, and once dominance is established, rates of aggression decrease" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 133).

Adding to this, studies that examined 'predictors of social dominance during group stabilization' (see Pellegrini, Bartini, 2001), have confirmed that at the beginning of the 6th grade (a case of school transition) it is the 'aggressive behaviours (and not

affiliation) that predict measures of social dominance in the first term'¹⁰⁸ (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 134; see Pellegrini, Bartini, 2001).

(b) With regard to the continuation of peer-to-peer social interactions along the school year, Pellegrini and colleagues (2011a) have taken into consideration 'the way pre-schoolers' social dominance and reconciliation correlated with social acceptance' (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 134). Results of this investigation led the authors to confirm that,

"During the fall term, reconciliation correlated positively with indicators of disliking by peers and social impact. Thus, high visibility in the fall seemed to come at the cost of social rejection. By the spring term, however, a positive correlation between reconciliation and friend nominations emerged. We hypothesized that decreasing coercion, ongoing high rates of affiliative behavior, and a history of reconciliation combined dynamically to buffer the effects of aggression and enhance peer liking. Supporting this view, being liked in the spring did not come at the cost of preschoolers' dominance. In fact, social dominance was positively associated with acceptance by peers across both fall and spring terms" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 134).

In other words, and considering that in the studies taken into consideration by Pellegrini and his colleagues (2011a) aggressive behaviour tended to be adopted at the beginning of the year, and at the beginning of new school programmes (first year of middle-school or high-school) the above-reported findings imply that aggressive behaviour results soon into social dominance (and high popularity) but it takes more time for the aggressive individual to recover on measures of social acceptance (liking).

(c) With regard to age, some studies have also taken into consideration the role played by the variation of the age of children/adolescents, arriving at the conclusions that along the years, relational aggression (see types of aggression) keeps being associated with low levels of likeability status (dislike), while physical aggression tends to lose "its power to predict who is disliked and rejected by peers" (for more details see Cillessen, Mayeux (2007, 150). Instead, when addressing the interaction between age, aggression and popularity status, it has emerged that, while years pass

¹⁰⁸ "In the spring of the 6th grade, both measures of affiliation [self- and diary reported] and only one measure of aggression (diary report) predicted social dominance" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 134).

by, both physical and relational aggression keep being associated with popularity (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 147-153).

To conclude these sections, it is possible to report that, thanks to more recent research which has identified the moderators of the status-behaviour link, "we know much more about the relationship between multiple forms of aggression and multiple status types" and also about the role of several other moderating factors (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 136). Investigations on children's peer relations proved useful in confirming and outlining the (contextual) functional role of aggressive behaviours. indeed, depending on the social context and on the type of status sought for, "aggression in the peer system can function as an adaptive behavior that allows youth to achieve important social goals" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 136).

3.4 – Conclusions: discovering the socially functional roles of deviant behaviours and updating the conception of the status-behaviour relation

The 1998 turn, brought developmental scholars to discover that there are different types of status, which are related to different behavioural strategies. At the end of the 20th century, peer relations studies on children have arrived at outlining a more nuanced articulation of the complex – and contextual – relation between status and behaviours, this by focussing on understanding and furtherly investigating the effective role of aggressive behaviours in social interactions among kids. The results of these investigations, discovering a socially functional role of deviant/aggressive behaviours, directly led to challenging and updating the traditional conception of the status-behaviour relation in favour of a more complex outline of this relation.

More in detail, the traditional perspective on the role of aggressive behaviours in social interaction has been tackled in both its components: on the one hand, the incompatibility of the behavioural options (compliance and deviance), and on the other hand, the assumed association of complying behaviours with social competence and of deviant behaviours with social incompetence and maladjustment.

Empirical evidence of these studies, undertaking an evolutionary perspective, has shown that aggressive behaviour can – in some cases – be socially adaptive, since it can be strategic and functional to both gaining popularity and strengthening status¹⁰⁹.

These results do not imply that aggressiveness is functional and socially adaptive *per se*, but rather that it is functional only if properly (strategically) used in specific contexts, for specific status seeking. Related to this, Smith (2007) has stated that,

¹⁰⁹ Among the nuanced details emerging from the second wave of studies, it is interesting to report findings on the direction of the causal path linking aggression to popularity status. Indeed, whereas Cillessen and Mayeux (2004) "found support for a model in which gains in popularity predicted subsequent increases in aggressive behavior". In line with this, Rose, Swensen and Waller (2004) also "found evidence for both causal paths in a cross-sectional investigation of popularity and aggression: Relational aggression predicted increases in popularity for seventh- and ninth-grade girls, and popularity predicted increased relational aggression for both boys and girls. Relational aggression and popularity were found to reciprocally influence each other in a third study of middle schoolers (Puckett, Aikins, & Cillessen, 2008). Thus, the interplay between popularity and aggression is likely bidirectional, with certain forms of aggression being used successfully by some youth to acquire popular status and that popularity then serving as an instigator for increased aggression" (Mayeux et al., 2011, 83).

The meaning of these results is that aggressiveness can be defined as having a bidirectional interplay; indeed, it can be used both (1) to gain popularity, and (2) in the aftermath of gaining popularity to maintain the high acquired status.

However, other authors underline the need to directly investigate the differences in behavioural strategies occurring between gaining status and maintaining status (Pellegrini et al., 2011a).

"aggressive behaviour has adaptive functions in nonhuman species and in humans. The adaptiveness of aggression is conditional and depends on context" (Smith, 2007, 80).

It is possible to interpret this *contextuality* as referring to both the variability of the social context¹¹⁰ and also the variability of the social status aimed at. Indeed, empirical evidence has shown that different types of status are associated to different behavioural characteristics and also to different behavioural strategies.

Specularly, by looking at the status-behaviour relation while focussing on behaviours: the exclusive implementation of *compliance* resulted being predictive of high levels of *likeability* status, the exclusive adoption of *deviance* resulted being predictive of *peer rejection*¹¹¹, while a *bistrategic* combination of socially compliant and socially deviant behaviours resulted being predictive of high levels of popularity status¹¹².

What emerges from these conclusions is that behavioural strategies vary on the basis of the aimed status, and therefore that aiming at popularity status or aiming at likeability status implies for kids the need to adopt and implement different types of status seeking behavioural strategies.

3.4.4 – From aggressiveness back to deviance meant as social undesirability

As reported above, a greater part of developmental peer relations studies has been focussed on addressing aggressive behaviours. Indeed, most part of the findings and conclusions here reported derive from studies which have been focussed on investigations of various types of aggression. Aggressive behaviours have been adopted as a lens through which to understand and interpret the existing relationships between status types and associated behaviours. indeed, studies on aggression and aggressiveness have allowed to understand the distinction between popularity and likeability status types and their related behavioural strategies.

¹¹⁰ Aikins and Litwack (2011) underline the importance of "group context" which alters the 'value' of behaviours. Indeed, as reported by the authors, "[a]nother factor in the effects of particular behaviors on acceptance and popularity is group context. Peer group norms and expectations influence how behavior is perceived. Prosocial behaviors that lead to peer acceptance may not be the valued behaviors that lead to popularity in the same peer group" (Aikins, Litwack, 2011, 143).

¹¹¹ Peer rejection is here meant as a symptom of social dysfunctionality/incompetence, or at least of non-highly-liked nor highly-popular kids.

¹¹² *Vice versa*, the three social dimensions (likeability, peer rejection and popularity are found associated with features of the respective behavioural strategies.

Thus, it can be concluded that studies on aggressiveness have generally interpreted aggressive behaviours as representative of antisocial behaviours; indeed, aggression is one form of behaviour that is explicitly 'deviant' from accepted norms and rules – *socially deviant*. Therefore, on these basis, *antisociality* is conceived, and here meant, as a form of social deviance – a departure from social rules and norms¹¹³.

Building on this, it is possible to transfer the findings related to specific types of antisociality, such as aggressiveness, to the more general concept of antisociality. Therefore, antisociality and antisocial behaviours are those behaviours that are socially deviant insofar as they are socially undesirable. Moreover, antisocial behaviours when being socially deviant nonetheless prove social competence – functional and adaptive within social interaction – according to the social context.

In addition to this further distinction, it is the case to report (and share) the concern shown by Peter Smith (2007, 73) in also distinguishing between scientific assessment of 'the correlates of aggressive behaviours' and their potential functionality, and conversely endorsing or 'taking a moral stance' on it. Indeed, on the one hand, scholars have no intent to approve or to endorse aggressive (or antisocial) behaviour. On the other hand, they simultaneously present social incompetence in place of social interest and undesirability results being restrictive to a proper understanding of social and developmental behaviour. Indeed, quoting the author,

«Of course, individual episodes of aggressive behaviour may be socially incompetent, and some individuals may be more aggressive than is good for them. But just because too much aggression or the wrong kind of aggression can sometimes be bad for an individual, does not justify labelling all aggressive behavior as "incompetent"» (Smith, 2007, 78).

To conclude, with no intent to speak in absolute terms, particularly given that the adaptiveness of aggressive behaviours is contextual and strongly related to a bistrategic combination with positive (non-aggressive) behaviours, socially deviant behaviours do not automatically qualify as socially incompetent (as has traditionally

¹¹³ To clarify, expressions such as positive behaviours and negative behaviours are, respectively, synonyms for prosocial (complying) and antisocial (socially deviant) behaviours. In line with these meanings, 'cooperative behaviours' and 'assertive behaviours' are also meant as synonyms of social conformity and deviance.

been done within developmental studies) but might instead correspond (according to the social context) to socially competent and successful behavioural strategies.

4 – From kids to states: transferring concepts and findings from developmental psychology to the IR theoretical framework on recognition process

This chapter opened by pointing out the shortcomings of IR conception on recognition process. Aiming to find possible solutions to those shortcomings, the central parts of the chapter has focussed on reporting about some of the most interesting findings achieved in developmental psychology which precisely address the shortcomings characterizing IR literature. Extensive sections have been devoted to report the characteristics, developments and findings of developmental psychological studies.

It is now time draw the strands together and fit the findings about children peer relations into IR-appropriate terminologies and concepts, this in order to close the gap of the IR formulation of the recognition process.

4.1 – On risks and advantages of borrowing from social developmental psychological literature

Certainly, caution is fundamental when endeavouring to apply to state actors those insights and findings drawn from studies focussed on social-individual levels and strongly imbued by human nature features (Stolte, 2015, 29).

However, IR literature, being a somehow recent field, has a long-standing tradition of building on other field's foundations and insights. This is why it is possible to identify an almost inherent analogy between individuals and states (Stolte, 2015, 29; see Markey, 1999, 162; Mercer, 1955; Wohlforth, 2009; Wendt, 2004).

The '*state as a person*' analogy has been historically adopted by political philosophers and political scientists in order to explain the behaviour of states in the international arena. This, as reported by Stolte¹¹⁴ (2015, 30), has resulted in the fact that nowadays,

"It is not only common to ascribe human characteristics like rationality, identities, interests, beliefs, or even feelings like fear or security to states (Wendt 2004:289),

¹¹⁴ Stolte supports the advantages of adopting 'motivational factors of status seeking' from the social-individual level, in order to theorize about the motives of state behaviour. See Stolte, 2015, 30).

but also virtually all models of state behavior—be it the rationalist model of profit- and security-maximization or the social-constructivist model of norm-driven behavior—are based on findings from research on individual human behavior" (Stolte, 2015, 30).

While not having intents to transfer to the IR field all human nature features characterizing children and adolescents still, joining this long-lasting tradition of state as a person analogy, the following section will focus on *cautiously* translating the most useful concepts and findings emerged from developmental psychological studies, into IR-suitable concepts and insights. This in order to update the IR conception on recognition process.

4.2 – Useful concepts to borrow: translating and adapting concepts of developmental psychology for the IR field

This section constitutes an endeavour to bring the most useful concepts encountered in the developmental psychology literature closer to the concepts constituting the IR literature. This, in order to establish the bases upon which to translate to IR also findings achieved by peer relations scholars.

As stated above, leaving behind the specific features of human interactions and of children in particular, this section will turn to those concepts which constitute the basis of the groundbreaking conclusions achieved by peer relations scholars. Precisely, the following section will focus on translating into IR-suitable concepts those notions which are constitutive of the evolutionary-developmental psychological studies. Among these basic notions it is possible to indicate (1) the groundbreaking distinction between popularity and likeability status types. Another constitutive element of peer relations studies is constituted by (2) the advanced specifications concerning the notion of deviance, and next to this, also the definitions of compliance and deviance behaviours. In this section, (3) attention will also be paid to the moderating role of the variable of *context* and *time*¹¹⁵ for the status-behaviour relation. Finally, next to the importance of

¹¹⁵ The variables of age and gender which were mentioned in child developmental psychology are omitted from the effort to translate useful concepts to IR. This because they are features peculiar to human-social environment, that attempting to translate them to IR literature would represent a stretch of specific concepts and features.

translating to IR the basic notions of peer developmental psychological studies, it is also important (4) to translate the findings achieved by the developmental studies.

Therefore, this last section will focus on reporting to IR the contents of peer relations studies, and also on underlying their implications to IR theoretical formulations of the recognition process and its related status seeking strategies.

4.2.1 – Different types of status: transferring likeability and popularity to IR literature

In order to transfer to IR, the different types of status that were developed in peer relations literature, it is important to focus on two main points: first, the distinction between the constructs of popularity and likeability, and secondly, the implications of this distinction with regard to the conceptualization of the status seeking behavioural strategies.

Moving from the first point, as constantly underlined in this chapter, the updated perspective of peer relations studies builds on the discovered distinction of the difference between *popularity* and *likeability*. Indeed, the main update in the discipline took place precisely when, in 1998, scholars definitively underlined that the traditional notion of *popularity* (meant in general terms) was implying two different constructs of social status: the one of *likeability* and the one of *popularity* (in its updated conception). Popularity status and likeability status are found being two different constructs with different associations, and different behavioural profiles (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007).

Next to this, it is important to also remind that the updated conceptions of popularity and likeability refer to two different measurements. Indeed, likeability refers to what has been labelled as an 'emotional judgement' – a personal opinion (private sentiment) of 'attraction or repulsion' towards a peer in the group. The main distinctive feature of this measurement, is that opinions of likeability do refer to individual's opinion and do not represent the general opinion (shared perception) of the group (Cillessen, Marks, 2011; see also Moreno 1934). Indeed, assessments of the 'most liked' in the group are obtained as the sum of individual opinions.

Conversely, assessments of popularity status refer to the so called 'reputational judgements', meaning with this that they are individuals' reports which account for the shared perception of the group. In other words, assessments of popularity given by an

individual does not refer to the personal opinion, but refers instead to the shared opinion of the group. Indeed, this measurement is defined as 'reputational' since it constitutes the evaluation of an individual's *social standing* in the group (Cillessen, Marks, 2011). A clear example can be given by recalling that while the dimension of likeability is assessed with questions as 'who do you like the most/least'; the dimension of popularity is investigated by asking individuals to report 'who is the most/least popular in the group' (Cillessen, Marks, 2011).

In a few words, the main distinction among the two constructs is that, likeability is the result of the sum of individual opinions about peer group members concerning personal judgements of attraction/repulsion, while popularity status refers to assessments of *social standing* obtained through individual accounts reporting on peer's social impact on the group (as perceived by the group). Being more precise, assessments of social standing include the underlying indexes of 'visibility, prestige and status with peers' that constitute the popularity status (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007; Pellegrini et al., 2011a).

In conclusion, the second important element to be considered here is the main implication to the distinction between popularity and likeability. Indeed, building on the distinctiveness of these two status types, scholars have developed a clearer and more nuanced understanding of the two corresponding behavioural strategies. Indeed, to be clearer, peer relation scholars have underlined that the two different status types also correspond to two different *social goals*, implying with this that aiming at one or the other status types requires very different status-seeking strategies. Indeed, while high scores of likeability are obtained through prosocial and complying behaviours, high levels of popularity status are obtained through the *bistrategic* combination of prosocial (socially complying) and antisocial (deviant) behaviours.

Let's now focus on the translation of these elements and conclusions to IR. This endeavour encounters a precise problematic. Indeed, the IR literature – perfectly in line with the fact that is still adopting the traditional perspective of status-behaviour relation – still deals with one single (and general) notion of *international status* which can be assimilated to the one of popularity status. This is to say that IR literature has not clearly distinguished between *simil*-likeability and *simil*-popularity concepts of status,

but implicitly adopts the concept of international status as an equivalent of the developmental-psychological notion of popularity status.

The abovementioned problematic becomes evident when considering that, while the general IR concept of *international status* resembles the *popularity* status type as conceived by peer relations scholars, still IR literature has associated to this general concept of *international status* a status seeking behavioural strategy which instead closely recalls the behavioural strategy that peer relations scholars have identified for the likeability social goal. In a few words, international status is conceived as a reputational status concerning social standing (similarly to popularity status), but it is also associated with exclusively complying behavioural strategies, which instead correspond to the behavioural strategy associated to status-seeking for the likeability social goals.

Having clarified this problematic, it is now possible to turn to the translation of likeability and popularity concepts into IR-suitable notions. The point of departure for this endeavour is the abovementioned fact that IR literature refers to international status in terms similar to popularity as adopted in developmental psychological studies. Indeed, even though the articulation of the IR concept of *international status* has been characterized by a rich debate focussed on understanding the main variables and components constituting the index of this dimension; still the different variants included in this debate correspond to the notion of *popularity* status. More in detail, the IR debate conceives the notion and dimension of *international status* in terms of hierarchy of social status, as much as in terms of prestige, reputation and resource control – or in more IR-adapt language: material power (see for example, among the others, Stolte, 2015, 26-29; Larson, Shevchenko, 2010; Johnson, 2007; Hobson, Sharman, 2005; Miller, 2003; Markey, 1999; Wohlforth, 1993; Gilpin, 1981; Bull, 1977). However, all these variants are closely related to the dimension of popularity status. popularity is indeed conceived as the social standing of an individual in the group, and precisely this *social standing* derives from social prestige, social power and social visibility (Pellegrini et al., 2011a). Similarly, in IR literature it is possible to refer to *international status* as "the rank or standing in the hierarchy of the group" (Stolte, 2015, 27).

Once pointed out that the IR dimension of status corresponds to the psychological-developmental concept of popularity status, it is the case to turn to the specific dimension of likeability and its IR equivalent.

We support here that the IR literature has, at least indirectly, addressed IR equivalents to likeability. Possible examples could be addressed in the notions of attraction, social and cultural affinities, special relationships, and similar. However, this list is not complete nor exhaustive, this because, such effort exceeds the main intents of this research. Indeed, it sufficiently meets the intentions of this research, to assess that IR-version of likeability refers to direct and intersubjective opinions that international actors develop among each other. For this reason, the IR-notion of likeability can be generally addressed as an 'affinity' between two states.

To conclude, it may seem that extending to the IR field the dimensions of likeability and popularity – which peer relations literature has defined as 'opinions' and 'judgements' (emotional judgements or reputational judgements) – is excessive or a conceptual stretch. However, the main point here is that these dimensions refer to evaluation of the status and the social interactions. While this has some specificities in the social level, still it is possible to identify evaluation about international status and interactions also in the international level. Indeed, leaders, as representatives of a state, constantly tend to position their state in the international social hierarchy, according to the status dimension and also publicly report about their international relations, their allies and 'enemies'.

Therefore, though not collected through surveys (as happens for kids' opinions in peer relations studies) still, interactions in international politics have always built on similar displays of 'judgements' and opinions given by one state about itself and the others.

Moreover, in support of this, it is also possible to report that peer relations studies are not limited to directly inquiring kids' opinions, indeed, it is possible to identify four commonly assessed 'sources of information' that have traditionally been used to study and evaluate peer relations. These sources can be qualified as follows. First, *self-report* is the evaluation that requests individuals, members of the studied social unit, to self-evaluate 'the state of *their own* peer relations'). Second, *peer-report* is the evaluation that requests individuals, members of the studied social unit, to *report* their own evaluation of the peer relations occurring *between other members* within of the same social unit. Third, evaluations are labelled *other-report* when they

request that adults, non-peer members of the studied social unit (such as teachers, parents, and counsellors) evaluate the state of the peer relations of one (or more) of the individuals who are members of the studied social unit. Finally, the fourth method of evaluation of peer relations is called *observation* and refers to evaluation conducted by an 'impartial third party who is trained to evaluate the interactions' and who does so by observing interactions by adopting a direct (real-time) or deferred (through taped archives) observational method¹¹⁶ (DeRosier, 2008; see also: Kupersmidt, De Rosier, 2004; Cillessen, Bukowski, 2000).

Though, peer relations studies have a specific methodology in order to assess peer status in classrooms and schools¹¹⁷ (see, Cillessen, Marks, 2012, 27), and given that nothing similar has yet been developed in the IR field, in order to temporarily close this gap, it is possible to gather self- and peer- reports by analysing public speeches of states' representatives in which international status issues are addressed. Next to this, IR scholars and analysts' foreign policy analysis could be assimilated to the *other-report* and *observation* methods of gathering information about international relations and status.

¹¹⁶ With the exception of self-report, all of the other methods for evaluating relationships are referred to as *alternative sociometric measures* (Cillessen, Marks, 2011, 25, 27).

¹¹⁷ It is possible to report about two main methodological options adopted to evaluate interactions (according to the abovementioned source of information that has been adopted), namely: (1) *rating scale questionnaires* and (2) *sociometric methods*.

The first methodology concerns questionnaires that report 'descriptive items that are rated along a certain scale'. This methodology is mostly used in combination with self-report and other-report sources. Indeed, a possible example is a questionnaire that asks the respondent to evaluate on a scale from 'Never' to 'Always' whether and how much a specific individual of the peer group (who, in the self-report case, can coincide with the respondent himself) has been a 'troublemaking friend' (DeRosier, 2008; see also: Kupersmidt, De Rosier, 2004; Cillessen, Bukowski, 2000). With respect to the second case, *sociometrics* is a methodology that is mostly used with peer-report sources of information. It requires individuals who are members of the studies social unit (peer group) to nominate those among their peers who better match 'specific social descriptions'. For example, the respondent might be required to nominate those members of the peer group who according to him/herself can best be described as 'fight a lot' – in further detail, for every 'specific social description', the number of 'peer nominations' received by each member is summed ('totaled') and 'standardized across the nominating group' (DeRosier, 2008; see also: Kupersmidt, De Rosier, 2004; Cillessen, Bukowski, 2000; Coie, et al., 1982).

The aim of this type of investigation is to assess the *social functioning* of each member of the group in relation ('relative') to the social functioning of the entire peer group – the author mentions the following example: "Thus, a given member's social functioning is assessed relative to that of the entire peer group (e.g., highly aggressive)" – (DeRosier, 2008; see also: Kupersmidt, De Rosier, 2004; Cillessen, Bukowski, 2000; Coie, et al., 1982).

4.2.2 – Transferring deviant and complying behaviors to the IR field: clarifications on the conceptions of deviance and aggressiveness

Previous sections of this chapter have built on the distinction between *social interests* and *individual interests*. Next to this, also the findings achieved in peer relation-developmental psychology studies had a fundamental relevance. Indeed, according to these findings deviant behaviours prove having a functional and adaptive role. Building on both these two components, have allowed to argument on the distinction between 'what is socially desirable' and 'what is socially competent and successful'¹¹⁸.

Recalling that there is no necessary correspondence between what is socially desirable and what is actually successful and competent – both for social interactions and within social context – helps to remind that the concept of *deviant behaviour* is meant (in the updated conception of peer relation studies) as *socially undesirable* behaviour, and not as *socially incompetent* behaviour. Indeed, while *socially incompetent* behaviours are behaviours which manifest the actor's lack of social skills, *deviant-undesirable* behaviours are behaviours which deviate from social norms, and which may also prove being socially competent (according to the social context of interaction).

Next to this, another important specification which must be advanced with regard to the concept of deviance, concerns, on the one side, its relation to aggressiveness and on the other side, also the distinction between physically aggressive behaviours and aggressive behaviours in general.

Moving from the first one, with regard to deviance and aggressiveness it is possible to recall, as mentioned above, that developmental psychologists have conducted their investigations of the status-behaviour relation mainly (but not exclusively) by focussing on investigations of the effects that *aggressiveness* plays on this relation. Therefore, aggressive behaviours have been adopted as the lenses through which to investigate the status-behaviour relation.

The second component of this advanced clarification on deviance and aggressiveness specifically concerns the fact that the notion of aggressiveness is not meant as physical aggression. Instead, it is meant in more general terms, this because it largely addresses different types of aggression, among which is possible to identify also

¹¹⁸ See previous sections and Smith, (2007).

relational types of aggression – that indicates forms of malicious gossiping, exclusion from activities, silent treatment, etc. aimed at harming the opponent's social status, friendships and reputation.

All these clarifications are useful when committing to translate the concepts of deviant and complying behaviours to IR. Indeed, it is necessary to insist on the fact that similarly as for social deviance, in the IR literature as well, deviant behaviours do not necessarily coincide with acts of war or aggression. This because, war or acts of aggression in international politics can also have a non-deviant character. Indeed, not only an act of war can be complying with international laws, but also, joining a coalition in war can also be perceived as socially due.

Therefore, in line with the specifications advanced for the developmental psychological studies, also for IR it is necessary to stress that deviant behaviours are those behaviours which can be defined as *socially undesirable* – since contrasting with (deviating from) social norms and rules, they can be military related, but not every military action is a deviant behaviour. Moreover, IR deviant behaviours, not only are not necessarily physical or directly aggressive behaviours¹¹⁹, but also there are other types of spoiler behaviours that can be addressed as such.

This directly challenges the current IR theoretical formulation of recognition game which confusedly contraposes *complying* behaviours¹²⁰ to *conflictual* behaviours. This terminological vagueness may give the impression that the opposite behaviour to complying is 'going to war' (Ringmar, 1999; 2002). However, going to war may be a way for the status seeker to prove its abilities in complying to war standards. Therefore, it is extremely important to highlight the relation between deviance and aggression, and also the distinction between socially undesired and socially incompetent behaviours.

Before giving some possible examples of deviant and complying behaviours, it is also possible to report on the relative and contextual value of deviance and conformity definitions. Indeed, the endeavour to transfer the concepts of deviant and complying behaviours encounters difficulties in advancing some historically stable

¹¹⁹ It is also important to recall that, deviant behaviours can be proactive or reactive, and that peer relations literature has asserted that only proactive deviance is related to popularity status.

¹²⁰ See chapter 1: the *plead/convince option* is presented as alternative to the *fight/go to war option* (Suzuki, 2008; Ringmar, 2012; 2002; 1996).

examples of deviant and complying behaviours. This mainly because complying and deviating from rules and social norms harbours in itself the constant permutation of both international context and social rules.

Acts that can be considered deviant in a certain historical moment may regain acceptability in another, and *vice versa*, acts that can be considered as compliant in a certain historical period or social context, may be perceived as deviant in other situations.

Notwithstanding the fugacity and contextual value of these examples, it is possible to recall some examples of complying and deviant behaviours. These examples are drawn from literature on SIT – social identity theory, which asserts that "a state has three different strategies at its disposal in order to improve its status. The possible tactics for status enhancement include (1) social mobility, (2) social competition, and (3) social creativity" (Stolte, 2015, 31).

Given that social mobility and social competition are respectively conceived as a *complying* strategy and as an *assertive strategy* to gain status, it is possible to recall some examples from these two behavioural strategies.

Examples for complying status seeking strategies,

"include West Germany's and Japan's search for recognition at the club of "civilized states" through the renouncement of offensive military force and the adoption of liberal democracy after the end of post-World War II occupation by the United States" (Stolte, 2015, 33; Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 10).

On the other side, examples of socially deviant (undesired) behaviour can include, among the others, "traditional geopolitical rivalry like competition over spheres of influence, or arms racing", or also, "military demonstrations or military interventions against smaller powers in order to demonstrate military capabilities". Other possible examples recall "North Korea's recurring atom bomb tests" and also – advancing an historical example – "Germany's competition with other Great Powers for its 'place in the sun' and the size of its battleship fleet" (Stolte, 2015, 33; Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 13.).

4.2.3 – Transferring other moderating factors to IR: focussing on the role of social context and time

(I) – On the role of social context

Focussing on the role played by the social context, in which interactions take place, it is possible to recall that the developmental psychology literature identifies two main types of social competition: content competition and scramble competition. To distinguish between the two, it is possible to remind that scramble competitions concern abundant resources, which are easily accessible through cooperative behaviours (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131). While, on the opposite, contest competitions concern scarce resources, therefore, the high value of the contended resources favours aggressive-competitive behaviours (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 131).

The endeavour to transfer these notions to the International Relation's field, and in particular the attempt to relate them to status seeking in the international arena, meets a route that is already marked out.

Indeed, the IR literature has already advanced debates on the scarcity and abundance of social status. With this specific regard, it is possible to mention Larson and Shevchenko, (2010) who contest the zero-sum game conception of status, and Hirsch (2005) who instead supports it.

Fred Hirsch (2005) defines international status as a 'positional good' and the status seeking competition as a zero-sum game. Under this perspective, states acquire international status at the expenses of other's loss. In opposition to this, Larson and Shevchenko (2010, 69) build on the idea that "status is based on a group's standing on some trait valued by society". To this, they also add that there can be multiple traits upon which to be evaluated,

"SIT [social identity theory] introduces an important modification to this prevailing zero-sum conception of status by pointing out that groups have multiple traits on which to be evaluated, so that comparisons among them need not be competitive. The availability of multidimensional comparisons underlies social creativity" (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 69).

With regard to this debate it is important to recall the distinction between status as the identification of international social rank of states, and a more general conception of 'identity'. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the 'multiple traits on which to be

evaluated' advanced by Larson and Shevchenko's (2010) do not pertain to the reputational international status (social ranking) but instead constitute and represent another possible type of status (meant in general terms), which can be identified next to the IR versions of *likeability* and *popularity* types of status.

As reported by the authors themselves,

"[In contrast to social competition,] social creativity does not try to change the hierarchy of status in the international system but rather tries to achieve pre-eminence on a different ranking system" (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 74).

Therefore, when referring to status meant as international social ranking (a specific type of status) it is difficult to exceed the contest competition framework.

In support of this, if not wanting to assert that status is a scarce resource for which states tend to compete, it is still possible to recall here that Ringmar (2014), in addressing the important roles of misrecognition, underlines also its role in 'maintaining exclusivity of the membership club' (Ringmar, 2014, 447 – see chapter 1). Indeed, Ringmar insists on the fact that misrecognition is functional to demarcating between member and non-members, this because 'once everyone is admitted on equal terms, membership loses its social prestige' (Ringmar, 2014, 447). Therefore, by extension, if everyone is classified as the internationally most popular (with higher social standing/status) then this classification would lose its role.

To conclude, it is possible to support that international social ranking (reputational status), if not properly a zero-sum game, it at least corresponds to a classification which grades international (peer group) members by *including* some as the one with higher status (in peer relations terms: the most popular) and *excluding* some others – the one with lower international status (in peer relations terms: the least popular). This because international social status refers to a hierarchical classification of social status ranking.

(II) – On the role of time

Scholars addressing the status-behaviour relation in developmental studies (focussed on children) have investigated the role played by time variables on this relation by

taking advantage of the characteristics of academic school year. Indeed, the analysis have focussed on two specific moments. The *school transition*¹²¹ moment has been addressed as a possibility to observe the first moments of the social interaction among kids, while the entire school year has been addressed as an opportunity to make long-term observations on the continuity of social interactions¹²².

In this case, the endeavour to transfer these notions to the International Relation's field meets the difficulties created by the fact that in the international arena, there is no identical correspondence to the school year term, and particularly to the traditional 'beginning of the academic year' – which is instead possible to identify in the school context. Indeed, while the school year term constitutes a natural structure which repeats on regular basis, and in which it is possible to identify a beginning, continuation and conclusion, this is not the same for the international environment, which instead may represent more of a continuous context of negotiation.

However, it is still possible to focus on the essential features characterizing peer relations studies on school kids and their observations of specific school year moments. Indeed, the beginning of the year and school transition¹²³, represent the moments in which 'groups are being formed' and in which takes place the negotiation of dominance and popularity status (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 135; see also Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007).

Therefore, when moving to the international relations system and its interactions, though it is not possible to clearly identify a yearly recurring beginning of the year, still it is possible to identify 'historical phases' in which states tend to concentrate the negotiation or renegotiation of the international dominance system and popularity. These phases can be identified as corresponding to important changes underwent by the system. Examples can be found in situations as, after an important regional or global war, when there is the rise and/or decline of important actors in the system – in which situation, the rising power or the other actors of the system have the possibility to seek for a renegotiation of the international status-hierarchy. Other

¹²¹ School transition is when students pass from primary to middle school and from middle to high school.

¹²² As mentioned above, the variable of 'age' identified in developmental studies is not reported to IR literature.

¹²³ The beginning of the year refers to the beginning of each academic year, while school transition refers to the page from one educational stage to the other, e.g.: moving from primary to middle school., etc.

possible examples may be represented by the constitution and institutionalization of important international organizations, institutions, treaties etc. which may be seen and treated as the possible arena in which to negotiate for status recognition – given their feature of reflecting at the international institutional level the status distribution.

In line with this, it is also possible to report here Ringmar's conception of 'formative moments', defined as those "times when new identities can be made and established" (see chapter 1; Ringmar, 1996). Therefore, also in IR it is possible to identify specific moments of negotiation of identities and status.

Peer relations scholars have stressed the importance of observing social interaction by focussing on 'sequences of behaviour', this because social interactions are dynamic and cannot be well represented "as summary variables aggregated across time" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 135). Indeed, as reported by the authors, "it seems too simple to treat social behaviors as isolated variables impacting an outcome" this because, for example, "[a]s demonstrated with observations of preschoolers, aggression may be used initially to access resources in contests, but within a few minutes the winners of these contests affiliate with their peers, often initiating reconciliations with them" (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 135).

Therefore, it is better to use dynamic models with longitudinal data (Pellegrini et al., 2011a, 135; see Long, Pellegrini, 2003), this also for IR studies focussed on understand social interaction and to model social interactive processes.

(III) – On combination

Results from peer relations studies present quite detailed and specific findings on the type of combination and on its timings. In the observations of kids behaviour, first comes the deviant behaviour, then follows a reconciliation attempt, actively advanced by the deviant kid, and specifically oriented towards the same victim of the first deviant act.

These elements will be kept into consideration when observing international interaction among states, but since this research is aiming at advancing the idea that there is a combination of behaviours, which is implemented in order to exploit its functionality, the following empirical analysis on the historical case study will not be too strict in trying to identify precisely this same timing of the bistrategic combination of

behaviours. This also by taking into consideration that international interactions among states do not take place in a school environment, and do not follow the timings of school year.

Indeed, given that in the international arena it is not possible to identify a specific moment equivalent to 'the beginning of the school', and that we are always observing interactions that relate to preceding interactions. In a similar context, in IR, each behaviour is following previous ones and it is also the antecedent of future interactions. Moreover, this implies that it is also difficult to identify a moment when most of the negotiation for status takes place. For kids this moment takes place at the beginning of the year and at the end of the first semester is possible to already possible to have an idea of the hierarchy within the group. But, since states are inserted in an environment of endless interaction, it is more complex for IR to find a precise sequence between deviance and affiliative/reconciliatory behaviours.

Therefore, what is important is that deviant behaviours are implemented ahead of reputational status seeking and that they are mixed with complying behaviours; and that they are more generally inserted in a status quo attitude (instead of a revolutionary). The intent is to make some changes, but not revolutionize the system.

Thus, as much as trying to precisely identify the IR equivalent to the 'beginning of the year' and to the academic year itself, it is also too restrictive to exclusively look for a precise equivalence between the abovementioned characters of the bistrategic combination.

The main point for this research is indeed the fact that international social standing (IR-popularity) may be aimed at through the implementation of both complying and deviant behaviours; yet, should it be possible to identify the presence of a specific combination of deviant and affiliative behaviours, it would be a further confirmative element for this research.

4.3 – Advancing a more nuanced perspective of the spectrum of behavioural options: Introducing to IR the concepts of social deviance, socially undesirable behaviours and the functionality of deviant behaviours

4.3.1 – Introducing to IR the distinction between socially undesirable and socially incompetent behaviours

The current IR conception of recognition process maintains that the recognition process is best accomplished through the implementation of norm conforming behaviours. Drawing from child development-psychological studies allows to see that this insistence on the "strong allure" of norm conformity (Suzuki, 2008, 50; see also Stolte, 2015) comprises, in IR literature, an overlap of *socially desirable* behaviours with *socially functional* behaviours.

International society has, of course, the need to maintain order and stability, therefore it is in the international social interest to discourage social deviance, but this does not necessarily correspond to the individual interests of status seekers. Moreover, it also does not necessarily portray the actual outline of the international recognition process. Indeed, this tendency has hindered the need to identify those behaviours that empirically prove being socially functional and adaptive though being socially deviant. Here lays one of the main shortages of the IR literature: the need to comprise in the outline of the recognition process not only what is socially expected and recommended but also what is effectively implemented by international actors in order to seek for the accomplishment of recognition process.

Empirical observations of blurred, mixed, foreign policies reveal and suggest that there must be something more than the clear-cut outline of the recognition process in exclusively compliant terms. This solicits the need – for IR literature as well – to accomplish investigations which distinguish between *what is suggested by the society* and what is *actually implemented in the international interaction* aiming at status recognition – so to be able to identify the actual recognition process and its behavioural strategies, though these strategies may be socially undesirable.

This implies that it is important for IR scholars to distinguish if an international deviant behaviour can be addressed as *socially undesirable* or as *socially incompetent* – this because in international system too, some socially undesirable behaviours may still prove being socially competent.

4.3.2 – On the behavioural spectrum: introducing the concept of deviant behaviours next to the option of conflictual behaviours

In the current conceptualization of the recognition process, IR scholars counterpose peaceful compliance to conflictual, or even violent, interaction (see Ringmar, 1996 and 2012).

This emerges by looking, for example, at Ringmar's studies (see chapter 1). The author asserts once the audience has misrecognized the candidate in his self-advanced identity, the candidate can (1) accept this verdict and live with it, (2) accept the verdict and start a programme of self-reformation in order to improve, or (3) stand by his own identity and try to convince the audience that this images actually applies to him (Ringmar 1996; 2012).

Focussing on the last option, its aim is to convince the audience that they are wrong and force them to change their minds. The main issue is understanding *how* does this convincing effort takes place.

The author outlines a dichotomy that on the one side see the option 'to plead' which, in Ringmar's own words, is related to a strategy that implies the adoption/implementation of *words* – "mere words are probably not going to get us very far" (Ringmar, 1996, 82). In 2008 and while building on Ringmar's work, Shogo Suzuki furtherly details this *pleading* option by stressing the persistence of an obligation, also existing for great power candidates, to behave as *good citizens*. Great power candidates can indeed convince their peers to grant them the recognition as great powers, by 'conforming as closely as possible to social rules and norms' (Suzuki, 2008, 50).

Therefore, the first extreme of this dichotomous couplet refers to social compliance, and also stands for cooperation and peaceful international relations¹²⁴.

At the other opposite of this dichotomous couplet it is possible to find a more articulated option – which goes from some general mentions of conflictual behaviours to more direct references to violent conflict and war.

Going by order, Ringmar, in 1996, mentions a more general option which provides the necessity of tacking action. He reports that,

¹²⁴ See chapter 2, the International Politics of Recognition.

"(...) We may try to plead with them perhaps, yet mere words are probably not going to get us very far. What we typically do instead is *to act*; only through *action* can we provide the kind of final, decisive, evidence that *proves* the others wrong. The action will be there for everyone to see and as such it will be an irrefutable manifestation of our character; our action will encroach upon our detractors and force them to reconsider their views" (Ringmar, 1996, 82).

In 2016, Ringmar outlines this second component of the dichotomy in more defined terms by describing it as "to fight for the self-descriptions" (Ringmar, 2012, 8). This fighting option explicitly refers to violent fighting – going to war¹²⁵.

Therefore, in the current perspective on recognition process, literature provides that options available to status seekers looking for recognition are to comply or to fight.

These two options are very distant in a possible spectrum of behaviours, and this distance is also revealed by the *ratio* behind the two choices (see chapter 1, section 4.4). Indeed, while compliance and norm conformity are presented as a socially natural path to follow in order to obtain the recognition of status within social boundaries – this because status is social and relational (see chapter 1). On the other side, the acting/fighting option is presented as a reaction to social rejection by the audience and more in general as an option for situations in which the recognition process has failed and is stuck¹²⁶.

As reported in chapter 2, current IR theory on recognition process reads the foreign policies in the international scenario with a very stark and dichotomous interpretative perspective. If observed behaviours are cooperative and compliant, then they must refer

¹²⁵ He indeed insists that, "Violence may work badly in interpersonal relations, since you cannot force someone to respect or love you. In international relations, however, the use of force has greater use and similar threats are often successful. A state that is not taken seriously can go to war to prove its importance, and for a group fighting for its "national independence," violence is often the only available option" (Ringmar, 2012, 8).

¹²⁶ It may seem that in the Larson and Shevchenko (2010) outline of the SIT-inspired identity management strategies (social mobility, social competition and social creativity), the social competition option has a more nuanced content with respect to the acting/fighting options outlined by Ringmar. The two authors indeed describe competition as an option which refers to *rivalry*, an attempt "to equal or outdo the dominant group in the area on which its claim to superior status rests. In international relations where status is in large part based on military and economic power, social competition often entails traditional geopolitical rivalry, such a competition over spheres of influence or arms racing" (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 72).

Though this description of social competition option is more nuanced than a direct mention of violent conflict, still the reasons behind its possible adoption, as reported by the authors, still retraces the ones presented by Ringmar (1996; 2012). Indeed, social competition is an option status seeking actors undertake when elite-group has impermeable boundaries for candidate members (which corresponds to a case of peer rejection) and the case in which the candidate "regard the higher-status group's position as illegitimate" (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010, 72).

to a status quo state. Therefore, the interpretative perspective can be *optimistic* (in Friedberg' terms – see chapter 2). While if, on the other case, the observation of assertive, challenging behaviours recalls possible threatens of overturning in the system. In this latter case, the interpretative perspective is *pessimistic*.

This interpretative framework has a too clear-cut variety of options in which everything that is not a 'complying behaviour' is automatically placed in its alternative option, which is quite large and tends to fall back towards violent conflict.

This all is to underline the need for a more nuanced outline of this behavioural spectrum, in which the alternative to compliance is not conflict and war, but instead is its opposite: non-compliance, or in other words, social deviance.

Again, deviance meant as deviance from norms and rules (non-compliance). Deviance meant as deviance from social expectations, and deviance meant as deviance with respect to what is socially desirable.

Deviant behaviours can be undesirable with respect to social interest, but can still prove being socially function within social interaction.

This is why, behind the *compliance* option and before the *fighting* option it is necessary to identify other behavioural options that are not the result of the candidate's final backlash provoked by the failure of the recognition process, neither the manifestation of a hidden desire to overturn the *status quo*.

Literature on child developmental psychology shows that there can be socially deviant and undesirable behaviours which still fall within boundaries of social interaction – and IR literature needs to identify them.

4.4 – Conclusions and implications

Coming full circle, the introduction into the IR field of findings derived from child developmental psychology proves helpful in suggesting that IR literature should (1) distinguish between types of status which are aimed by status seekers; (2) adopt the conception of deviant undesirable behaviours and (3) distinguish between aims (status seeking) and means with which it is possible to achieve these aims.

Indeed, peer relations literature has suggested that there are different behavioural strategies for different types of status, and this is particularly important to underline that observed behaviours do not necessarily represent symptoms of the individual's intentions towards the social group. This because the different types of behaviours are instrumental to the social goals, and therefore deviant behaviours can be adopted as means – functional when combined with complying/prosocial behaviours – in order to obtain popularity status.

These peer relations studies have indeed shown that there are different types of status (likeability status and popularity status) which represent different social goals and entail different behavioural strategies.

More in detail, while the observation of exclusively compliant behaviours proves predictive of likeability status; specularly, the observation of exclusively deviant behaviours is predictive of peer rejection. However, the observation of a bistrategic combination of deviant and affiliative behaviours is instead predictive of high levels of social standing (popularity status).

Therefore, these empirical findings assert that status seekers aiming at reputational status, adopt a behavioural strategy consisting in a bistrategic combination of complying and deviant behaviours.

This all allows to overcome the dichotomous perspective that used to approach the analysis of international foreign policies by opting for an *optimistic* or a *pessimistic* perspective. In this way, under this updated perspective, it is possible to go beyond the need to separate between complying behaviours on one side and competitive/conflictual behaviours on the other.

Observed behaviours do not directly represent the intentions underlying the state's foreign policy, instead they should be considered under a more comprehensive perspective in which they result being instruments at the service of status seeking

strategies; moreover, their implementation varies on the bases of the type of status aimed at.

This opens to the possibility of understanding the more mixed foreign policies implemented by status seekers.

Findings from peer relations studies suggest that, compliant behaviours only are predictive of high levels of social acceptance; the adoption of deviant behaviours only is predictive of social rejection, while the adoption of deviant behaviours in combination with complying and reconciliatory behaviours is predictive of high levels of reputational status (*popularity* among kids).

Therefore, updating the current IR conception on recognition process, this research advances that, similarly, the observation of exclusively compliant foreign policies is symptomatic of a state seeking for international social acceptance (namely, *likeability*), while the compresence of both complying and deviant international standing can be the manifestation of a functional combination aiming at international social standing (namely, *popularity*).

Specular implication to this is that status seekers states, when seeking for high levels of international social standing (reputational status), achieve this social goal by implementing a combination of complying and deviant behaviours.

This also means that, the recognition of this specific type of status – international social standing – is not chased through the adoption of exclusively compliant behaviours (as advanced by the current literature), but instead it is pursued through the combination of complying and deviant behaviours, and deviant behaviours are adopted within the boundaries of social interaction.

Moreover, insisting on the role of deviant behaviours, similarly to the insufficiency of compliant behaviours in order to obtain reputational status, the exclusive adoption of deviant behaviours is equally inadequate in order to obtain high levels of reputational status.

It follows that, deviant behaviours are not always the manifestation of social maladjustment, neither they always represent symptoms of overturning intentions. This because, it may be that they are adopted in functional combination ahead of the recognition of international popularity status.

Therefore, peculiarity of this advanced perspective is that the final aim of this way of implementing deviant behaviours – in combination with complying behaviours and while aiming at international social standing status – does not correspond to an intent of overturning or challenging the system, but instead has to be understood within the frame of status seeking behavioural strategies.

This thesis arrives at advancing that, building on the most recent child developmental literature, we don't expect status seekers, seeking for international social status, to behave only conformingly. Instead we expect reputational-status seeker to aim at the recognition of their status by combining both deviant and complying behaviours, this with the intent of remaining within the boundaries of social interaction¹²⁷.

In the next section, the case study of Italian foreign policy under the Mussolini government will be presented and analysed to verify the validity of this update to IR recognition theory.

¹²⁷ These conclusions do not necessarily facilitate the scholars and analysts' task to outline the international interactions into a simplified analytical framework. Indeed, the outline on recognition process emerging from this research is more articulate and nuanced, and this is what allows to have a more detailed understanding on more mixed and nuanced foreign policies.

Chapter 4

1 – Research design

Chapter 3 was devoted to outlining this specific interpretative framework: guided by the intent to understand the compresence of conforming and deviant (prosocial and antisocial) behaviours. Insights drawn from child and adolescent developmental peer relations psychological studies suggest that there are different types of behavioural strategies for different types of social goals (status seeking). More in detail, peer relation studies show that (1) behavioural strategies implementing only compliant behaviours are predictive of high levels of social acceptance (likeability); (2) the exclusive implementation of deviant behaviours is predictive of peer rejection and bully behaviour; (3) the most effective strategy in order to gain social reputational status is a bistrategic combination of aggressive and affiliative behaviours.

On these basis, it is possible, on the theoretical level, to advance that similarly to children interactions, the observation of a compresence of complying and deviant behaviours in the international arena may manifestation (and part) of a status seeking strategy.

In chapter 4 we will now turn to an empirical verification of these theoretical findings. Indeed, the refinement of IR concepts obtained by drawing on psychological child development literature is useful to better understanding the interactions taking place in international politics within recognition processes.

Therefore, the hypothesis guiding this chapter is that the observation of deviant behaviours next to complying ones in the foreign policy of a reputational-status seeker, instead of being symptomatic of social maladjustment or threatening intentions (as the current IR conceptions of recognition process and status seeking would suggest), may represent the manifestation of a *bistrategic* approach to the recognition of status seeking¹²⁸.

¹²⁸ It is important to advance that, it is behind the intention of this research to focus on evaluating and analysing the effectiveness of the implementation of the possible strategies here identified. Therefore, the analysis conducted in this chapter will not aim at understanding whether the strategy implemented to obtain status seeking was effective or not, but will focus instead on understanding what type of strategy was adopted, and, ore in particular, if this strategy corresponds to the one suggested in chapter 3.

1.1 – Requisites for the selection of the case study

To understand this, it is necessary to focus on a case study that meets certain important requisites. First, the case study should be a state that is a status seeker going through the process of recognition.

According to the IR theoretical conceptualization of the recognition process, is expected to perform complying behaviours in order to accomplish this process. Therefore, the second requirement for the selection of the case study is that in its foreign policy, along with the complying behaviours, the selected state should also perform deviant behaviours, which appear as anomalous if interpreted within the current theoretical framework and conceptualization of IR recognition process.

This implies looking for a state that is officially aiming for international prestige (status seeker) and that, instead of being exclusively compliant and conforming performs also, apparently, anomalous deviant behaviours.

Implicit but important: a social group is required, which implies a social context at the basis of the observed recognition process. Therefore, the case selection should consider that the status seeker must interact with an international society – the more this society is identifiable, the better it is able to demarcate the possible rules and norms that may be violated (deviated) by the candidate's deviant behaviour. Moreover, in this way it is also possible to identify the audience itself, with which the candidate is interacting and whose recognition is seeking for¹²⁹.

Other important requisites concern more practical issues, such as the possibility of accessing the decision-making process that lies behind the observed international behaviours. Indeed, next to the need to select a status-seeking state that performs both prosocial and antisocial (deviant) behaviours, there is also the necessity to select a case that is historically completed and that is documented by accessible historical documents/files/records. Archival documents will be used in order to retrace the decision-making process and thereby to investigate if there is any possibility that

¹²⁹ Related to this point, as reported in the literature (see Ringmar 2002; 2008) recognition is granted both by the higher audience and also by the smaller actors. However, considering that the status seeker should behave compliantly towards the higher audience, the research will focus on identifying mainly those deviant-aggressive behaviours addressing actors of the higher audience.

international performance of deviant behaviours was intentionally adopted with strategic/functional aims.

1.2 – Case study selection: Italian prestige politics under Mussolini's government

This empirical investigation will focus upon the case study of Italian foreign policy under Mussolini government. This is a good case study because Italian foreign policy under Mussolini, since its very first moment, was oriented towards a prestige politics. In the last months of 1922, after Mussolini took the role of Italian Prime Minister (PM) and Foreign Minister (FM), the first speeches on foreign policy, held on November 16th, 1922 in front of the Italian Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, clearly referred to the government's intentions to seek international recognition of Italy's equal role to Great Britain and France. The same perspective on foreign policy was replicated ahead of the Lausanne Conference of November 1922, where Mussolini insisted on Italy being recognized as equal to its Allies. The desire shown by Italy to be recognized as a great power corresponds to the first requisite for the selection of the case study.

Additionally, this case study meets the second requirement in case selection, as it is widely recognized and accepted by historians and scholars that Italian foreign policy under Mussolini's government was characterized by *fits of temper*, which scholars have usually related to different reasons among which internal politics, ideological issues related to fascism, or to Mussolini's personal character or inexperience. These behaviours, in the Italian case, represent some anomalous behavior with respect to the expectations of the current IR framework on recognition process. Indeed, in a situation in which Italy was officially seeking for reputational-status recognition, its international standing was not *as compliant as possible to social norms and rule*, but instead manifested patent signals of socially deviant behaviours (in the sense of 'deviant from norms and rules').

With regard to the third requisite, Italy was part of the League of Nations, which constitutes a good orientation in outlining the international social group and the related norms and rules with which Italy was expected to comply. This membership,

together with the relations with other European countries, and particularly relations with Great Britain and France, help to identify an international social background to implement as a guideline for identifying internationally complying and deviant behaviours. Moreover, Great Britain and France also represent the audience with which Italy was interacting in order to be recognized as a peer, and the peer members whose recognition Italy was looking for. Indeed, as mentioned above, the staple in the Italy's communication on its foreign policy has always been its desire to be recognized as equal to (and by) France and Great Britain.

Lastly, this specific moment of Italian foreign policy is historically completed and allows the author to access the documentation that can help retrace the decision-making behind foreign policy orientation and action.

Moreover, despite how complex and delicate this case may be, it nevertheless proves to be so relevant that numerous historical studies have been conducted on it. This secondary literature, which dates from the immediate aftermath of the end of the fascist regime to more recent days, positively contributes to this research by providing an already articulated series of various alternative explanations to this anomalous deviant behaviour (explanations), which will be taken into consideration in this research.

In conclusion, it is important to specify that, given that this empirical investigation aims at analysing a case study that is a status seeker which aims at achieving the recognition of its status, still by remaining within the boundaries of social interaction. This implies that the analysis needs to consider a historical period in which the possibilities of a concrete overturning of system were not included in the calculations of the Italian government.

This clarification recalls Schweller's (1994) study of the concept of bandwagoning. The author distinguishes two forms of bandwagoning. One option is bandwagoning in order to avoid attacks (as a form of 'appeasement'), and the other option is bandwagoning in order to share the split (the opportunistic form of bandwagoning for profit). Challenging the idea that states' first concern is to achieve greater security, and introducing the idea that states may bandwagon for profit as well (1994, 86), Schweller introduces the possibility that a state may decide to pay a high price, and take a great risk in order to improve its position in the system (1994, 85).

What is interesting, according to Schweller's perspective, is the fact that, with the emergence of the Hitlerite German threat, Europe saw the emergence of a serious threat to its *status quo*.

Therefore, being Italy a status seeker, the rise of Hitlerite Germany, offered to Italy, among the others, the possibility to consider whether to opt for gaining from an alliance with France and Great Britain or by allying with Germany. Historic documentation shows that, though what is usually believed, it took many years to Mussolini to accept the concrete possibility of an alliance with Germany (bandwagoning for profit).

A confirmation of the consciousness of this possibility can be found in the fact that, for almost all the 1930s, Italy attempted to use its dialogue with Germany as a threat to France and Britain in order to convince them both to be more concessive¹³⁰.

The perception that at the end of 1920s, the international game was changing in favour of what Schweller (1994) named as *bandwagoning for profit*, is confirmed for (at least) the Italian case by historians, who support that the rise of National Socialism represented on the international level the rise of a revisionist power that could have overturned the European balance. Moreover, the beginning of 1930s, saw in 1931 not only the year in which Europe began to suffer the effects of the economic crisis but also the year in which Japan – whose socialization to the European Society deserves great attention – invaded Manchuria and opened irreversible cracks in the League of Nations' system.

With regard to this historical context, scholars identify, in the Italian foreign policy of those years, the first signals of the Italian desire – or at least of the Italian calculations on the possibilities¹³¹ – to gain from the potential reallocation and redistribution of power and relations that could have followed a strong overturning of the system (Milza, 2000).

¹³⁰ It is also important to remind that this same game was done by France and Great Britain as well that tried to use the card of the Hitlerite threat in order to convince Italy to cheese its requests (Milza, 2000).

¹³¹ Milza, reports that, though Mussolini feared the German expansionism and in particular its ambitions of Anschluss, still "la prospettiva dell'arrivo al potere dei nazisti lascia intravedere una ridistribuzione dei ruoli e delle forze da cui Mussolini intende avvantaggiarsi, se non legando le sorti del proprio paese a quelle della Germania, almeno approfittando della fine dell'egemonia francobritannica e della minaccia che il revisionismo hitleriano farà pesare sulla pace e sull'assetto territoriale imposto dai vincitori del 1918 per porsi come mediatore e far valere le sue rivendicazioni" (Milza, 2000, 658).

Milza (2000) reports that at the end of 1920s, Mussolini left his FM role to Dino Grandi this because – in a situation in which Italy hadn't fulfilled its aspirations since France and Great Britain were not available to share their dominance with Italy – he thought it would have been better to adopt a *low profile foreign policy*, this while waiting for a substantial change in the international arena that would have allowed Italy to reopen the dossier of Italian claims. In a similar context, the author continues,

"L'ascesa del nazionalsocialismo, divenuta evidente dopo le elezioni del settembre del 1930, costituiva per l'appunto un segno di cambiamento radicale, giacché profilava l'arrivo al potere di una forza politica che faceva della revisione dei trattati un punto essenziale del proprio programma e intendeva procurarsi i mezzi per porre termine all'egemonia francobritannica" (Milza, 2000, 657).

With regard to this quotation, it is important to specify that Milza adopts the term 'revisionism' while overlooking the differences between the Italian revisionism that, at least during 1920s, was certainly aiming at pursuing changes in the international system (especially with regard to its social standing), but did so by not aiming at overturning the system. Italy was revisionist within social boundaries, while the Hitlerite Germany manifest itself as an *underminer* of the system.

Supporting this perspective, Moscati writes that the Italian revisionism (of 1927) was still, subordinated to peaceful means,

"Dal 1927 in poi, appare chiaro che la politica di Mussolini è ormai impostata sulla sua adesione definitiva al 'revisionismo', anche se l'intenzione è di giungere ad una revisione dei trattati unicamente per via pacifica" (Moscati, 1963, 111).

Therefore, as mentioned above, since the intent is to focus specifically on the Italian attempts to pursue *prestige politics*, but also to look at a prestige politics that aimed at obtaining compensations without overturning the system, the periodization of the case study will focus on a specific period of the Italian foreign policy (FP) under the Mussolini government.

Obviously the *a quo* date corresponds with the beginning of Mussolini's government itself (October 31st, 1922), after which, as mentioned above, followed clear signals and

official declarations of Italian prestige politics, such as the first speeches Mussolini held in front of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies on November 16th, 1922¹³².

While, with regard to the *ad quem* date, due to these above-mentioned reasonable suspects of the existence of calculations concerning the possibilities of overturning events in the international arena, the analysis will have its conclusive date in the last years of 1920s. Indeed, 1930 will be considered as the furthest period to be taken into consideration.

Moreover, in order to contextualize this period, it is also important to recall that the Italian commitment to prestige politics lasted for many years, during which Mussolini alternated in the role of Foreign Minister with Dino Grandi (from September 12th, 1929 until July 20th, 1932) and with Galeazzo Ciano, who was in charge as Minister of Foreign Affairs from June 11th, 1936 until February 6th, 1943¹³³.

Since Grandi entered into office as Foreign Minister in 1929, this leads the analysis to focus mostly on the previous year, though, in the final sections, there will be a brief analysis also of the characters of Italian foreign policy under the guidance of the Grandi-Mussolini couple.

Another important element of contextualization concerns instead the first years of Italian foreign policy under Mussolini. Indeed, between 1922 and 1929 – years in which Mussolini was interim FM – a relevant change is historically identified in January 1926 when Salvatore Contarini resigned as General Secretary of the Italian Foreign Ministry¹³⁴. It is historically recognized that Salvatore Contarini represented the so-called *traditional Italian diplomacy* and that his presence was important to containing and limiting Mussolini in his foreign policy decisions, as well as to orienting him

¹³² Following these, and of extreme value and relevance, are the declarations that were made on November 19th, 1922, on the occasion of the Territet (Switzerland) meetings organized by Mussolini himself ahead of the Lausanne Conference of November 1922. Indeed, on this specific occasion, Mussolini took his first steps onto the international stage by officially declaring that his intention was to obtain equal treatment of Italy by its allies: France and Great Britain must treat Italy as a sister and not as a servant.

These declarations, made in the first months of the Mussolini government, while Mussolini was FM, are important for identifying the intentions of Italian foreign policy, which clearly correspond to obtaining recognized Italian prestige in the international arena.

¹³³ This implies that Mussolini was *interim* Minister of Foreign Affairs from October 31st, 1922 until September 12th, 1929, and again after Grandi, from July 20th, 1932 until June 11th, 1936, when Ciano followed and served until the fall of the regime in 1943.

¹³⁴ The General Secretary of Italian Foreign Ministry corresponds, in this case, to the second-highest role in the Foreign Ministry Office, after the Foreign Minister – a position which in this period was held by Benito Mussolini himself (1922-1929).

towards the Italian traditional style of diplomacy (more in line with Sforza and the Liberal period), whose foreign policy aimed at maintaining and perpetrating good and cooperative relations with neighbours (etc.). by taking into consideration these elements, the analysis will focus on identifying possible elements of continuity and discontinuity with regard to this issue.

2 – Empirical investigation of Italian prestige politics

2.1 – Italy is a status seeker seeking for the recognition of its international prestige and reputation

The first requisite in the selection of the case study is, as mentioned above, the identification of a state that is seeking for the recognition of its status. More in detail, the aimed status should be a reputational status. the observed status seeker should seek for the recognition of its international social standing.

With regard to this, Italian foreign policy under Mussolini's government was characterized by ambitions for an Italian international prestige politics. Indeed, Italy longed for the recognition of its status as a great power, and this ambition is directly related to the international social standing hierarchy.

It is also possible to report that these Italian ambitions to great power status are long-lasting in the Italian foreign policy. Indeed, there is agreement among scholars on the fact that, since its reunification, the Italian foreign policy has always been characterized by the aspiration to become a great power¹³⁵. MacGregor Knox (1991) points out the main elements that characterize the long-lasting Italian ambition to become a great power,

"La parte della classe dirigente liberale che si interessava alla politica estera aspirava a fare dell'Italia una vera grande potenza, che consolidasse il suo territorio nazionale reale o presunto, che detenesse un vasto impero coloniale, che dominasse il Mediterraneo, e che fosse universalmente rispettata e – meglio – temuta"¹³⁶ (Knox, 1991, 288).

What emerges is an enduring Italian insistence on the strengthening of its territorial possession, on the extension and projection of its authority into an empire with colonies¹³⁷, and also on the importance to dominate the Mediterranean Sea. All

¹³⁵ On the characters of continuity and discontinuity of the fascist Italian foreign policy with previous liberal governments see, among the others, Bosworth, 1991b; Knox, 1991.

¹³⁶ See also, Chabod, 1971; Bosworth, 1979; Curato, 1982.

¹³⁷ In line with this perspective, Bosworth underlines the important role that Italian leaders assigned to the realization of an Italian Empire: "Quasi tutti gli eredi del Risorgimento condividevano l'ambizione che l'Italia dimostrasse in un modo o nell'altro, con un impero, che anch'essa era in grado di fare ciò che avevano fatto le altre grandi potenze" (Bosworth, 1991b, 59).

elements that, under the Italian perspective, contribute to its role as a great power equal to its Allies.

Building on these premises, it is possible to state that Fascism has incorporated these same aspirations¹³⁸ (Knox, 1991, 287).

These ambitions were clearly asserted in the first months of Mussolini's assignment as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

To highlight this character of Italian foreign policy, attention will be devoted to the declarations made by Mussolini in November 1922 – the first month of his government, established on October 31st, 1922.

In order to understand Italy's first approach to the international arena, this section will consider the interview Mussolini released to a correspondent of the *Sunday Express* (London) on the morning of November 3rd, 1922 (Susmel, 1958, 3).¹³⁹ Following that discussion, the section will focus on the speech held in front of the Italian Chamber of Deputies on November 16th.¹⁴⁰

As a third element, the section will focus on some of the declarations and interviews – together with the press release of November 21st – released ahead and during the Territet and the Lausanne Conferences, held in Switzerland from November 19th (in Territet) to November 22nd, 1922.¹⁴¹

Going by order, in the interview that Mussolini released on November 3rd, 1922, to a correspondent of the *Sunday Express*, he leaves no doubt that it is Italy's intention and ambition to be considered and treated as an equal member in the great powers club. In fact, the interview, which was also reported by Italian newspapers in the following days,¹⁴² begins with the following declarations:

¹³⁸ Knox reports that, scholars who disagree on other points, still agree on this feature of continuity in the Italian ambitions – in his own words, "Il fascismo vesti in camicia nera molte fra le ambizioni più sfrenate dell'Italia liberale" (Knox, 1991, 287).

¹³⁹ The interview took place in Rome at approximately 12.45, while Mussolini was returning to Hotel Savoia. On the same occasion, and right before the interview with the *Sunday Express*, Mussolini answered other journalists' questions. The interview released to the *Sunday Express* was reported by the Italian newspapers *La Stampa* (n. 262, November 4-5, 1922, 56°) and *Corriere della Sera* (n. 266, November 6, 1922, 47°).

¹⁴⁰ The same speech, with the addition of a brief declaration directed to the Senators, was given by Mussolini to the Senate on the afternoon of the same day. For this reason, the section will focus on the speech given to the Chamber of Deputies.

¹⁴¹ The conference moved to Lausanne from the 20th to the 22nd.

¹⁴² As reported above, the interview released to the *Sunday Express* was reported by Italian newspapers *La Stampa* (n. 262, November 4-5, 1922, 56°) and *Corriere della Sera* (n.266, November 6, 1922, 47°).

"L'Italia vuol essere trattata dalle grandi nazioni del mondo come una sorella, non come una cameriera. Una nuova èra spunta per il mio paese, un'èra di sviluppo. Noi non vogliamo pestare sui piedi delle altre nazioni, ma vogliamo insistere sulla nostra dignità" (Susmel, 1958, 3).¹⁴³

In this interview, Mussolini directly and clearly declares that Italy wants to be treated by the other great powers 'as a sister and not as a servant'.

In line with this declaration on November 16th, 1922, Mussolini illustrates to both the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the Senate the perspective that will guide Italian foreign policy in his upcoming Ministry.

In the first presidential speech addressed by Mussolini to the two Chambers, the Prime Minister, after having dealt with domestic affairs issues, outlines the first public and official overview of the Italian foreign policy his government intends to follow (Susmel, 1958, 15-25).

The Minister begins by declaring the importance of foreign policy issues to his government and by outlining the fundamental guidelines of the government towards international politics. Mussolini states the importance of the respect of the international *pacta sunt servanda* principle:

"[I] trattati di pace buoni o cattivi che siano, una volta che sono stati firmati e ratificati, vanno eseguiti. Uno Stato che si rispetti non può avere altra dottrina" (Susmel, 1958 v. 19, p. 18).

But next to this declaration he also adds the possibility for treaties to be renegotiated, and the utility for Italy to renegotiate and revise international treaties when need be.¹⁴⁴

This ambivalence towards the international treaties is strictly related with the Italian international role and status. Indeed, Mussolini clarifies that Italy's perspectives on international politics will pursue national interest and dignity.

"Per ciò che riguarda l'Italia, noi intendiamo di seguire una politica di dignità e utilità nazionale (*Vive approvazioni a destra*).

Non possiamo permetterci il lusso di una politica di altruismo insensato o di dedizione completa ai disegni altrui. *Do ut des. (Vive approvazioni)*.

¹⁴³ Directly quoted from Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini, edited by Susmel and Susmel (1958). The interview is reported with the title "*L'Italia e le Grandi Potenze*".

¹⁴⁴ See Susmel, 1958, 18-19.

L'Italia di oggi conta, e deve adeguatamente contare. Lo si incomincia a riconoscere anche oltre i confini. Non abbiamo il cattivo gusto di esagerare la nostra potenza, ma non vogliamo nemmeno, per eccessiva ed inutile modestia, diminuirla.

La mia formula è semplice: niente per niente" (Susmel, 1958 v. 19, p. 19).

Moreover, he continues, by clarifying that this all is about the Italian position with specific regard to the social standing of its Allies,

"Roma sta in linea con Parigi e con Londra, ma l'Italia deve imporsi e deve porre agli Alleati quel coraggioso e severo esame di coscienza ch'essi non hanno affrontato dall'armistizio ad oggi. (*Vive approvazioni*).

Esiste ancora una Intesa nel senso sostanziale della parola? (...) Quale è la posizione dell'Italia nell'Intesa, dell'Italia che non soltanto per debolezza dei suoi Governi ha perduto forti posizioni dell'Adriatico e nel Mediterraneo, mentre si ripongono in discussione taluni dei suoi diritti fondamentali; dell'Italia che non ha avuto colonie, né materia prime ed è schiacciata, letteralmente, dai debiti fatti per raggiungere la vittoria comune?

Mi propongo, nei colloqui che avrò coi primi ministri di Francia e Inghilterra, di affrontare con tutta chiarezza, nella sua complessità, il problema dell'Intesa ed il problema conseguente della posizione dell'Italia in seno dell'Intesa. (*Vivi applausi*)" (Susmel, 1958 v. 19, p. 19-20).

Therefore, it emerges that this Italian international standing, and in particular its behavioural approach, as reported in the words of his leader, results being directly associated to the Italian ambitions. Mussolini himself connects the main elements of this speech by hinting that while his foreign policy is peaceful and compliant, still it is about Italy's equal social standing. Therefore, this should help to understand the role of those apparently negative elements in the Italian behaviour as part of this Italian commitment in pursuing its international status, and that they shouldn't be described and oversimplified with the negative meanings associated to terms such as 'adventurous or imperialistic' politics.

The function of these apparently assertive features is still to be understood within a peaceful foreign politics, that coexists with the pursuit of national interest.

"Una politica estera come la nostra, una politica di utilità nazionale, una politica di rispetto ai trattati, una politica di equa chiarificazione della posizione dell'Italia nell'Intesa, non può essere gabellata come una politica avventurosa o imperialista nel senso volgare della parola.

Noi vogliamo seguire una politica di pace: non però una politica di suicidio" (Susmel, 1958 v. 19, p. 20-21).

On this occasion, Mussolini is more formal in declaring his government's intentions towards international politics; however, his declaration is still quite direct in confirming Italy's intent to be recognized as a great power, and to do so by pursuing some autonomy of action – by respecting the international principles and treaties, but also by revising treaties when necessary.

This strongly asserted Italian will, somehow represents a threat to the system, but this threat of revisionism is still balanced by the insistence on the peaceful and compliant intentions that Italy has towards the system. Indeed, the same intent of revisionism is subordinated to the importance of treaties and international principles that, once signed have to be respected.

In this speech Mussolini describes Italy as a state that has good international relationships¹⁴⁵, knows the rules and respects them, but that will also try to create its own space by negotiating on them. Therefore, the intent is to pursue Italian prestige by following a peaceful international standing but also by enforcing Italian resoluteness, "Vogliamo fare una politica estera di pace ma nel contempo di dignità e di fermezza e la faremo"¹⁴⁶ (Susmel, 1958 v. 19, p. 22).

Finally, this section focuses on the declarations and interviews released on occasion of the Territet and the Lausanne Conferences held in Switzerland in November 1922.

Merely reporting how the Territet meetings occurred would be sufficient to give a clear idea of the Italian ambitions to be internationally recognized as a great power. In fact, the Lausanne Conference was planned in order to address issues related to the peace in the Middle East, and after some postponements¹⁴⁷ (related to the British representatives), the Conference was set to occur in Lausanne, in Switzerland, beginning on November 20th, 1922. Ahead of this meeting, it was also established that on the 19th, the three prime ministers would have a preliminary meeting in Territet, in

¹⁴⁵ In the speech, he lists all the countries with which Italy is having good relationships (thanks to treaties, agreements, etc.) among which there are: Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, the Baltic States, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada and South America. He also mentions his commitment to further improve Italian relations with the US.

¹⁴⁶ This also brings him to underline the importance to have a united bloc in the domestic level. See Susmel, 1958 v. 19, p. 22-24.

¹⁴⁷ See Mussolini's intervention in the second Cabinet meeting, November 8th, 1922, and also Mussolini's interview released to French journalists on November 9th, 1922; in: Susmel, 1958, 7, 8-9.

the south of Switzerland and close to the Italian border. As Gino Berri reported in an article published by the Italian *Corriere della Sera* on November 20th, 1922,¹⁴⁸ after the establishment of the Territet meeting, the French and British prime ministers requested the preliminary meeting to occur instead in Lausanne (Susmel, 1958, 420). What might appear as a simple issue of location manifests instead the significance it had with regard to *social standing* and *status*, if not for all participants, at least for the Italian PM.

The signals that the preliminary meeting and its specific location – closer to Italian borders, which required both the other ministers to get closer to Mussolini – harboured a deeper meaning and value are confirmed by the declarations that Mussolini released right before the arrival of Curzon and Poincare. In an interview¹⁴⁹ that Mussolini released to Italian journalists at approximately 6 pm, Mussolini expresses his intention to address the issue of the Italian position in the Entente with the following words,

"È probabile – *egli ha detto* – che in questo colloquio venga posta la questione del blocco dell'Intesa e particolarmente della posizione che in tal blocco occupa oggi l'Italia. È necessario precisare – *egli ha detto* – prima di ogni altra cosa se l'Italia nell'alleanza occupa il posto di una serva, di una camerier o quello che spetta ad una grande potenza. Prima bisogna intendersi bene fra noi tre, poi cercheremo di intenderci con in turchi [NdA: facendo riferimento alla Conferenza di Losanna sulla pace in Oriente prevista per il giorno successivo] (Susmel, 1958, 31).

This declaration constitutes the key perspective under which to look at this event and its symbolic importance for Italy's status seeking.

In fact, although the French and British requests were accepted and the meeting was planned and organized to occur in a hotel in Lausanne, still, as Berri wrote, Mussolini imposed its will by replying to the shared planning by strongly insisting for the meeting to occur in Territet. His insistence imposed that the meeting had to be planned and prepared for both locations, and until the last moment, it was not clear where it was to take place. The uncertainty was ended by his declaration upon his arrival in Territet: "Li aspetto qui" (I will wait here for them to arrive). Indeed, Berri reports that it was

¹⁴⁸ *Corriere della Sera*, n. 278, November 20th, 1922 (Susmel, 1958, 420-421).

¹⁴⁹ The interview is reported to have been released at approximately 6 pm and published on *Corriere della Sera*, on November 20th, 1922 (n. 278, 47°). See Susmel, 1958, 31).

very important for Mussolini to host the first meeting with the French and British Prime Ministers as close to Italy as possible¹⁵⁰ (Susmel, 1958, 420).

After this imposition by Mussolini, the British PM (George Curzon) and his French counterpart (Raymond Poincare) arrived in Territet by train. Welcomed by Mussolini at the train station, Lord Curzon is reported to have declared that the two PMs had decided to go meet Mussolini to make his acquaintance and talk with him about various issues. As reported by Berri,

"L'on. Mussolini, seguito (...) da altri si reca alla vicina stazione a ricevere i due personaggi. L'incontro è stato cordialissimo. Lord Curzon ha dichiarato che i due ministri alleati hanno voluto recarsi a Territet incontro all'on. Mussolini per avere il piacere di conoscerlo ed intrattenersi con lui sopra varie questioni" (Berri in Susmel, 1958, 421).

After this shaky start, the three prime ministers had a private meeting at the *Grand hotel des Alpes* that lasted almost half an hour, followed by two other sessions opened to the heads of delegations and experts.

As anticipated by Mussolini in his declarations released before the arrival of Curzon and Poincare at the train station, it effectively resulted that, in the private meeting, the three ministers, under Mussolini's initiative, dealt with the issue of the Italian position in the Entente (Berri in Susmel, 1958, 421).

In fact, the Territet meeting was followed both by an interview released by Mussolini, after his arrival in Lausanne,¹⁵¹ to a reporter (special envoy) of the *Petit Parisien*,¹⁵² and an official press release concerning the content of the private meeting between the three ministers. In the interview, the Italian Prime Minister revealed in advance the main content of the press release and highlighted the meeting's value for Italian

¹⁵⁰ "Il convegno di Territet, preliminare alla conferenza della pace in Oriente, ha subito una serie di contrattempi, alla fine dei quali si è ritornati al punto di partenza. Dopo che la riunione a tre era stata fissata a Territet, i due ministri inglese e francese avevano chiesto che avesse luogo, invece, a Losanna. Così sembrava che dovesse avvenire ed il necessario a tale scopo era stato predisposto a quell'*hotel Beau Rivage*¹⁵⁰, quando da parte italiana si insisté per Territet. Ne seguì un nuovo scambio di telegrammi con conseguenti ordini e contrordini. I preparativi furono fatti in tutte e due le località e sino a ieri sera [19 novembre] ancora non si sapeva quale sarebbe stata la prescelta. Mussolini arrivato disse 'Li aspetto qui'. Egli ci teneva che il primo ministro francese e il ministro inglese fossero suoi ospiti e così è avvenuto infatti." The article, by Gino Berri, is dated November 20th, 1922, early morning, Territet. See Susmel, 1958, 420.

¹⁵¹ All the PMs and their retinues moved towards Lausanne right after the preliminary meetings were over (Susmel, 1958, 420).

¹⁵² Interview released by Mussolini to a special envoy/reporter of the *Petit Parisien*, on November 19th, 1922, at approximately 12 pm; published by *Corriere della Sera* (n. 278, 47°). Reported in Susmel, 1958, 32-33.

prestige politics. In fact, he asserts that the Conference marked a historical moment for the Entente, which represents a solution for the European situation and that this solution is guaranteed only through the implementation of a perfect equality among the allies. In Mussolini's words,

"Questa conferenza – *ha detto l'on. Mussolini* – segna una svolta decisiva nella storia dell'Intesa, la quale noi non manterremo rigorosa se non spiegandoci lealmente e con una collaborazione stretta e franca. Il solo rimedio alla situazione attuale è di ristabilire su una base di eguaglianza perfetta l'unità di fronte degli Alleati. Bisogna realizzare questa unità di fronte non solo rispetto alla Turchia, ma anche alla Germania" (Susmel, 1958, 32).

Mussolini refers to a 'united front' of the allies that requires an equal treatment of its members and implies an equal treatment of Italy with respect to the other great powers.

Moreover, the perspective that Mussolini expresses in the interview also provides a key to interpreting the common press release published right after the Territet meeting, on the evening of November 19th. The official press release reports that,

"(*Comunicato ufficiale*). – Il signor Raimondo Poincaré, l'on. Mussolini e lord Curzon hanno avuto stasera una prima conversazione, nella quale si è nettamente affermata la loro comune risoluzione di regolare con lo spirito della più cordiale amicizia e sulla base di una perfetta uguaglianza fra gli alleati tutte le questioni che stanno per essere trattate alla Conferenza di Losanna. Essi domani [20 novembre] avranno un nuovo colloquio."¹⁵³ (In Susmel, 1958, 422).

Following this, on the morning of November 21st, Mussolini released some declarations¹⁵⁴ to a reporter of *Matin*, in which he repeats this idea of equality between Allies. In fact, talking about the European situation, Mussolini dwells on his vision of the (European) united front. In his own words,

"Non credo alla forza della resistenza dell'Europa centrale; ma credo alle virtù possenti della nostra civiltà occidentale se uniremo tutte le nostre forze. Ecco il grande fascio della difesa della nostra cultura e della nostra società contro l'odio e contro la decomposizione. Il Belgio, la Francia e l'Italia sul continente; L'Inghilterra

¹⁵³ The official press release is dated November 19th, Territet, and was published by *Il Popolo d'Italia* on November 21st, 1922 (n. 279, IX). See Susmel, 1958, 422.

¹⁵⁴ The declarations were released on the morning of the 21st, while in Lausanne, to a reporter from *Matin* and published also by *Il Popolo d'Italia* on November 23rd, 1922 (n. 281, IX). See Susmel, 1958, 34.

al loro fianco, che comprende il suo vero interesse: questa è l'alleanza con la quale si può resistere alle influenze funeste dell'Oriente" (in Susmel, 1958, 34-35).

In a similar context, he adds that Italy must enter this alliance as a great power among its peers.

"In questa alleanza l'Italia deve entrare a testa alta, come una grande potenza fra eguali e non come la nazione ingannata e delusa del 1919" (in Susmel, 1958, 35).

On the evening of November 21st, Mussolini released another interview,¹⁵⁵ this time to Italian journalists, in which he takes the opportunity to stress that after Territet, the meeting of the Lausanne Conference is an occasion on which the value of Italy's great power status is emerging and is recognized.

"Che cosa volete sapere? Non posso essere minutamente preciso – *ha cominciato l'on. Mussolini* – ma posso dirvi che oggi ho avuto due importanti colloqui (...). Nella conversazione con lord Curzon ci si è avviati verso la realizzazione concreta del patto di eguaglianza fra gli Alleati, cui si accennava nel comunicato d'ieri (...). Se vi interessa, potete aggiungere che tutti gli uomini politici coi quali ho discusso delle questioni internazionali mi sono apparsi animati dal più vivo desiderio di accordarsi con l'Italia e dalla disposizione ad un valutamento del nostro paese diverso d quello che poteva seguire la situazione di ieri" (Mussolini in Susmel, 1958, 37).

It is revealing that this interview was published by the Italian newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* with the title "Il Patto di eguaglianza fra gli alleati ribadito" – the reaffirmation of the pact of equality (Susmel, 1958, 37).

Similarly, on November 24th, *Il Corriere della Sera* reported an interview that Mussolini released on the afternoon of November 22nd to a news correspondent from the Morning Post (London). The interview was reported with the title "Reciprocità di trattamento fra alleati" – equality in the interactions between allies (Susmel, 1958, 39). In this interview, Mussolini states that while he recognizes that the Entente constitutes a unified front, he is still not satisfied with the position that Italy has within it.

"*Mussolini ha detto che le prime giornate della conferenza [di Losanna] hanno avuto almeno un risultato notevole: l'entente presenta ancora una volta una fronte unita. Ma l'on. Mussolini non è ancora soddisfatto della posizione dell'Italia nell'Intesa. L'unità di fronte non durerà se l'Italia nei prossimi mesi non sarà*

¹⁵⁵ The interview was released on the evening of November 21st, 1922, while in Lausanne, to Italian journalists and was published on November 22nd by *Il Popolo d'Italia* (n. 280, IX). See Susmel, 1958, 37.

rassicurata su questo punto. *Questo ha detto e ha fatto capire Mussolini passeggiando su e giù per la stanza: l'unità di fronte è un grande risultato – egli ha detto – ma si deve assicurare anche l'assoluta eguaglianza per l'Italia, piena reciprocità tra l'Italia e i suoi Alleati. Nulla che sia meno della piena reciprocità può bastare*" (Mussolini in Susmel, 1958, 39).

It is also important to report that these declarations cannot be considered as an actual and realistic report of the international role and status effectively ascribed to Italy; it is enough to compare the distance between the telegraphic Territet official press release – in which the recognized equality between Italy, France and Great Britain was apparently affirmed – and the more vivid declarations made by Mussolini during the Territet and Lausanne Conference. While these declarations cannot be taken as accounts of the real situation, they nevertheless perfectly represent and manifest Italy's intentions and desire to have its status as a great power recognized¹⁵⁶.

In conclusion, Mussolini's insistence on Italy's desire to be treated with equality by the other great powers clearly confirms that Italy was aiming at a prestige politics. Moreover, it is also possible to insist on the fact that the aimed status corresponds to a *reputational* type of status this because it clearly concerns Italy's international social standing with respect to the social standing of its Allies. Examples can be found in the continuous mentions made by Mussolini with regard to the Italian prestige and to the necessity of an equal treatment with its Allies.

Having pointed out that the Italian foreign policy under Mussolini's government was a status seeking prestige politics, it is now important to focus on understanding *how* this status seeking aim was pursued, and it is possible to advance that the speeches and interviews here analysed suggest that Mussolini's declarations and

¹⁵⁶ It would be interesting to consider also the role played by the Italian narrative of its great power status. With regard to this, Richard Bosworth reports that Italy was treated and considered a great power, not because of its real capacity (power) but because the other powers accepted it and were acquiescent. In fact, in general, Italy was the weakest among the great powers: "L'Italia era la grande potenza meno industrializzata; aveva le risorse naturali più modeste; la sua costa era la più vulnerabile; i suoi piani di mobilitazione erano i più complessi ed arcaici; la sua bilancia dei pagamenti era la più debole; il suo commercio e la sua finanza erano i più timidi e provinciali; la sua popolazione era la meno numerosa; i suoi tassi di analfabetismo erano i più elevati; era la grande potenza che spendeva meno per le tecnologie moderne; le sue masse erano le meno "nazionalizzate". Anche se in alcuni periodi qualcuna di queste generalizzazioni poteva dimostrarsi falsa, e in un campo o nell'altro l'Italia fu sempre e di gran lunga la grande potenza più debole" (Bosworth, 1991b, 39).

Therefore, the reason behind Italy being allowed into the GP club is identified by the author in the narrative adopted and implemented by Italian leaders, "La posizione dell'Italia dipese essenzialmente, dall'inizio alla fine, dal linguaggio e dal mito. Era una grande potenza che conduceva una politica estera da grande potenza perché i suoi uomini di governo affermavano che era grande e perché i dirigenti degli altri stati accettavano o incoraggiavano questa pretesa" (Bosworth, 1991b, 39).

intentions of foreign policy clearly contradict with the expectations of current IR theory on recognition process that await to see behaviours of norm conformity.

Mussolini underlines the Italian intention to respect international principles, and on the opposite, the intention to revise international treaties (when possible) both aim at the Italian intention to gain international standing as a great power.

This approach to Italian foreign policy, while appears as contradictory according to the current perspective on status seeking and recognition process, it represents some first signals of a combination of opposed behavioural attitudes implemented in order to gain reputational international status.

The next sections, will focus on a closer analysis of the way in which Italy attempts to gain its social standing position under the Mussolini government.

2.2 – Italy's thunderous entrance on the international scene: the Corfu incident

The second requisite for the selection of the case study was that the selected case has to be a status-seeker that, while complying with social norms and rules as suggested by the current studies on recognition process, also performs deviant behaviours with respect to shared norms and rules.

In line with this requirement, this section will be devoted to a review of international behaviours implemented by Italy in its international relations, with a specific focus on observed and deviant behaviours that have proven difficult to understand according to the traditional perspective.

This review will be broad and non-exhaustive since the main intent is to highlight anomalous and deviant behaviours adopted by Italy ahead of its international recognition. To discuss this recognition, secondary literature such as historical accounts and investigations (undertaken by historians) will be used to identify what was considered (and sometimes still remains) as anomalous and deviant behaviour in Italian foreign policy.

Moreover, recalling that kids used to manifest higher levels of deviance at the beginning of the academic school year, specific attention will be devoted to Mussolini's first approaches to the international arena. Indeed, even though – as mentioned in the previous sections – the international environment does not perfectly replicate the kids' interaction environment, and in particular the school environment with its 'beginning of the year' moment in which kids use to negotiate for the distribution of status; still it is possible to identify a sort of first appearance of the new Italian government on the international scene. These first moments are useful to understand the Italian international approach and the first impression it attempts to make.

Therefore, it is possible to begin this analysis by recalling here one of the main *fits of temper* that scholars have identified in the Italian international standing under the Mussolini guidance: the Corfu crisis and in particular his assertive reaction to the situation.

The next section will provide a wide historical contextualization, this in order to help understanding the observed events and behaviours. A more detailed report on events of the diplomatic crisis between Greece and Italy, together with a report of

current explanations of these events and in particular of the Italian intransigence. To conclude, an alternative reading of Italian behaviour will be advanced, this by building on the analysis of diplomatic documents. The analysis will focus on the messages Mussolini sent to his collaborators abroad, this with the aim of understanding the intentions and objectives of his orders and decisions.

The intent of this research is to understand if Mussolini implemented these assertive behaviours in order to obtain the recognition of Italian great power status. This would require that the observed deviant behaviours have to be limited and combined with complying/cooperative behaviours.

This all would confirm that the assertive behaviours were implemented in *function* of status seeking. That deviant behaviours were not deviant per se, but functionally deviant ahead of the attainment of the recognition of status seeking.

2.2.1 – Historical contextualization

As mentioned in the previous section, at the end of 1922, after Mussolini established his government, the Italian Prime Minister committed to publicly declaring Italy's intentions to be recognized as a great power. In this situation, Mussolini – who nevertheless was leading an authoritarian regime – devoted attention to also highlighting that Italy intended to comply with international treaties.

Historians report that these reassurances were useful, on the one hand, to positively qualify the fascist government in the eyes of international interlocutors. Mussolini wanted to present his government as a stable and credible international actor, and at the same time, he wanted to avoid the creation of international troubles that would have been problematic for domestic politics (see Milza, 2000, 442).

However, these same declarations of conformity and peacefulness, must be read while considering that they were combined with declarations indicating the Italian intentions to revise and readapt international treaties [peace treaties] in those cases where they did not respect Italy's international value and national interests. As Mussolini declared on November 16th, 1922, in front of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate, Italy would give *nothing for nothing*; in fact, the guiding principle for Italian international politics was the *do ut des* principle (see Susmel, 1958, 19).

This combination of complying and assertive behaviours towards international interactions was also replicated in other situations. As an example, right before the establishment of his government – specifically, a few days before Italy was to sign the treaty of Santa Margherita – while in Udine, Mussolini publicly protested that 'Italy should be listened to by other nations of the world' (Papafloratos, 2015, 261). On the same occasion, he also openly showed his agreement with those supporters that were calling for "Fiume Italiana" and "Dalmatia Italiana" (quoted in Papafloratos, 2015, 261). In line with this assertive stance, when Belgrade manifested intentions "to register with the Secretary-General of the League of Nations both the Treaties of Rapallo and Santa Margherita" – signed by the Italian democratic government mid-October 1922 – "Mussolini replied that he would regard that registration as a hostile act" (Papafloratos, 2015, 261-262). However, contrasting with this attitude, on October 31st, when he officially took office as Italian Prime Minister, he also "ordered the fascist of Fiume to keep quiet and to create no complications" (Papafloratos, 2015, 261; Milza, 2000, 441-442; Guariglia, 1950, 12).

Again changing direction, in the upcoming years, Mussolini's interactions with the city of Fiume, and with Belgrade itself, returned to an assertive stance. In fact, in July 1923, one month before the Corfu crisis broke out, Mussolini came up with the proposal to annex the city of Fiume in exchange for other Italian territories (Milza, 2000, 457). These negotiations concluded in 1924, when Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs signed the second Treaty of Rome, in which Italy was officially assigned sovereignty over the city of Fiume (Milza, 2000, 457).

While it would be possible to explain this decision to tone down statements as a necessity for the fascist government to reassure international interlocutors (Milza, 2000, 442), nevertheless, in general, it is also possible to describe Italian foreign policy from 1922 until 1926 – when Salvatore Contarini resigned as General Secretary of Italian Foreign Ministry – as a prestige politics that also claimed a peaceful and compliant attitude towards international politics as established by the victorious powers (Milza, 2000, 441-442). In particular, Milza reports that Contarini's experience in foreign policy allowed him to impose on the Prime (and Foreign) Minister a foreign policy oriented towards international caution and prudence that favoured friendly relations with all countries, beginning with Italy's closest neighbours – Yugoslavia and France (Milza, 2000, 442).

2.2.2 – Events of the Corfu incident (August–September 1923)

In relation to these reports, it is also interesting to consider that in this first phase of Mussolini's leadership (which extends from 1922 until 1926) while the main orientations of Italian foreign policy are described as positively influenced by the experience and farsightedness of the Italian traditional diplomacy, nonetheless it also occurred one of the most controversial episodes of Italian foreign policy under Mussolini's guidance: the Corfu incident.

The context in which this episode occurred was constituted by traditionally good and friendly relations between Greece and Italy (Papafloratos, 2015, 263).

Reviewing the events by order, on August 27th, 1923, while in Greek territory, members of the Italian delegation participating in the international commission organized by the Conference of Ambassadors¹⁵⁷ with the aim to officially delineate the Albanian–Greek borders were ambushed and killed by unknown persons who escaped into the Albanian borderlands – and who have remained unknown until the present day. Among the victims were General Tellini and two other Italian officials, together with an interpreter and a driver (Papafloratos, 2015, 264).

In reaction to these serious and difficult events, while the Italian population showed "a perfect flare-up of national pride and patriotic sentiment" (Papafloratos, 2015, 264–265), Mussolini, as Foreign Minister, took an extremely energetic stance. Just two days after the accident, on August 29th, he presented the Greek government with an ultimatum (Papafloratos, 2015, 265). As reported by Papafloratos (2015), in the ultimatum,

"He assumed, without a proof that the responsibility for the murder belonged to the Greeks. The demands made in the ultimatum were extremely severe and the Greek government, by common consent outside of Italian circles, could not accept them" (Papafloratos, 2015, 265).

This action was not in line with the suggestions coming from the administrative staff of the Italian Foreign Ministry, which instead suggested maintaining a cautious position.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ The Conference of Ambassadors was "a gathering of the British, Italian, Japanese (and sometimes Belgian) ambassadors in Paris to discuss international problems with the French Foreign Minister" (Papafloratos, 2015, 264).

¹⁵⁸ In his memories, Guariglia reports that it was not possible for the diplomatic personnel to orientate Mussolini's inflexible reaction (Guariglia, 1950, 28; Anchieri, 1955a, 376).

The ultimatum was not only formulated with intimidating style and language but also required the Greek government to comply with highly demanding and humiliating requests – among which were included the immediate opening of an inquiry to be conducted by Italian personnel and the payment to the Italian government of a compensation then equivalent to fifty million lire¹⁵⁹ (Milza, 2000, 448; see also Guariglia, 1950, 12; Anchieri, 1955a, 377-378).

Moreover, we must not forget the symbolic meaning of presenting a severe ultimatum that inevitably recalled the methods adopted by the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum sent to Serbia in July 1914 (Papafloratos, 2015, 265; Anchieri, 1955a, 378).

The Greek government replied to this ultimatum by partially accepting some of its requests and rejecting some of the points that Athens considered unacceptable. Still, the government was willing to compensate the families of the victims with 'fair compensation' – not necessarily the amount required by Italy (Anchieri, 1955a, 379). It is important to report that in its reply, the Greek government clarified that in the case that Italy was not satisfied with its reply – given that both countries were members – Athens would resort to the League of Nations, committing to accept its decisions regarding the dispute (see *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani – DDI*, serie VII, vol. II, n. 217, p. 144).

In reaction to Athens's decision to comply with only some of the ultimatum's requests, which Mussolini considered as a rejection of the Italian requests (Anchieri, 1955a, 379), on August 31st, Mussolini ordered Italian naval forces to Corfu to occupy the island (Milza, 2000, 448; Anchieri, 1955a, 378; *DDI*, serie VII, vol. 2, n. 216, p. 143). The military mission was composed of no more than 1000 Italian marines. Moreover, Mussolini – in his communication to the Italian representatives – presented this act as 'peaceful and temporary', aimed at obtaining from Greece the requested compensations

¹⁵⁹ For a complete list of the content of the ultimatum that Italy presented to the Greek government, see *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI)*, VII serie: 1922-1935, vol. II (27 aprile 1923 – 22 febbraio 1924). Document registered under number 195 (DDI, n. 195, p. 133).

The *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* were published in 1955 and are mentioned in this research with the acronym DDI, followed by the number of the series, the number of the volume and the protocol number of the mentioned document, and possibly the page.

and at defending Italian prestige. For this reason, the act was not an act of war. Directly quoting from the 1923 communication,¹⁶⁰

"(...) Sono stati pertanto impartiti gli ordini per lo sbarco nell'isola di Corfù di un contingente di truppe italiane. Con questa misura di carattere temporaneo l'Italia non intende compiere un atto di guerra ma soltanto tutelare il proprio prestigio e manifestare la sua inflessibile volontà di conseguire le riparazioni dovutele in conformità delle consuetudini e del diritto delle genti" (Mussolini in Documenti Diplomatici Italiani, serie VII, vol. II, n. 216, p. 143).

It also occurred that on the same day, during these operations, the Italian fleet guided by Admiral Solari opened fire on civilians – mainly refugees hosted on the island – and killed between ten and fifteen¹⁶¹ women and children (Papafloratos, 2015, 265-266; Milza, 2000, 448). This was a turning point in the sequence of events that aggravated the Italian situation. The internal documentation and further studies on the case reveal that these events were the result of the decisions made autonomously by Admiral Solari, who "ordered the bombardment of two castles of the island relating to the Middle Ages" (Papafloratos, 2015, 265). This decision contravened the original orders to maintain calm and not open fire against a demilitarized island (Anchieri, 1955a, 379; see also DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 216, n. 234, n. 414).

However, it was difficult to interpret and present these military acts as something different from acts of aggression that violated the rules and spirit of the international system, since these aggressive acts were also directed at a country that was a member of the League of Nations (Milza, 2000, 448; Anchieri, 1955a, 380). It followed that this episode "aggravated the diplomatic position of Italy" (Papafloratos, 2015, 265) by also turning the international media – with the exception of the Soviet media – against Italy (Anchieri, 1955a, 380).

Even considering that the forceful acts undertaken by Admiral Solari were not part of the Italian government's original plans, other assertive actions undertaken by Italy remain to be explained: Italy did all in its power to prevent the League of Nations from intervening in the situation.

¹⁶⁰ The telegram to the Italian representatives abroad is quoted in a communication that Mussolini sent to the Italian King, Vittorio Emanuele III, who was in Racconigi.

¹⁶¹ Anchieri (1955a) refers to ten, while Papafloratos (2015) reports fifteen.

In fact, even before knowing about the bombardments on the island, Salandra, Italy's representative in the League of Nations, considered suggesting to Rome how to prevent any possibility that Greece might recur to the General-Assembly first, which would have placed Italy in the position of being arraigned in the position of defendant. To prevent this possibility and to comply with article 15 of the Covenant, Salandra suggested that Italy must send an immediate and spontaneous communication to the Council in Geneva (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 216, p. 147). However, Mussolini's answer to this suggestion was clear: he had no intentions of allowing the League to intervene because, according to his view, the League had no jurisdiction over the issue. Therefore, his orders to Salandra asked the Italian representative in Geneva to postpone any decision from the League until the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors – which was leading the international commission with which the Italian personnel was cooperating when murdered (Anchieri, 1955a, 380; see also DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 227, p. 150). Conversely, to Mussolini's hopes, Greece appealed to the League on the bases of articles 12 and 15 of the Covenant – while making no mention of the bombardments on Corfu. It is presumed that the appeal was written before the bombardments occurred. In fact, the appeal makes no references to the application of article 16, which regulated sanctions, but insisted on the jurisdiction of the League.

After the appeal was presented on September 1st, 1923, Mussolini "tried to postpone the discussion in the General Assembly, in which the representatives of the so-called 'small-countries' (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes being prominent among them) had the majority" (Papafloratos, 2015, 266).

At this point, it was Salandra's duty to defend the Italian position in Geneva. According to the available documentation and historical reports, he first tried to convince Mussolini of the legal difficulty of disqualifying the League's jurisdiction and, after having failed in this, he also invited Mussolini to find someone else who might have supported these claims (Anchieri, 1955a, 381). However, in the end, the Italian diplomat accomplished his duty notwithstanding his awareness of the weakness of Italy's argument supporting the League's lack of competence (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 248, p. 162; Anchieri, 1955a, 381-385). Specifically, the Italian position was based on three arguments, as reported by Anchieri:

"1) la vertenza implicava l'onore ed il prestigio di uno stato sovrano e non poteva quindi esser assoggettata ad un arbitrio obbligatorio; 2) l'occupazione di Corfù non era da considerarsi nè come un atto di guerra nè come un pericolo di guerra; 3) fintantochè la Conferenza degli Ambasciatori era legalmente investita della questione col consenso della Grecia, non vi era luogo all'intromissione della [Società delle Nazioni], la quale aveva già riconosciuto, in precedenti casi analoghi, la priorità della Conferenza stessa" (Anchieri, 1955a, 384).

To Salandra, it was clearly impossible to try to disqualify the jurisdiction of the League by claiming that the Corfu occupation – however peacefully it might be presented – was a matter of national honour and prestige. The third point was more reasonable, but still, the threat Italy posed to the League was not irrelevant. In fact, Italian representatives received the order to claim that had the League intervened in the situation, Italy would have left the League (Anchieri, 1955a, 382; DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 269, p. 173).

The inflexible Italian position was officialised in the meeting of the Council of Ministers that occurred on September 4th, 1923 (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 292, p. 190). As reported by Anchieri,

"Una così recisa e pubblica dichiarazione, che suonava sfida alla Società, non era fatta né per attenuare fatta né per attenuare la generale ostilità della stampa straniera e dell'ambiente societario né per agevolare il compito del Salandra di ottenere dal consiglio una rinuncia di fatto della sua competenza" (Anchieri, 1955a, 384).

Along with this fall-out, the French government had an interest in maintaining Italian support with regard to the Ruhr issues and in preventing the League from confirming its jurisdiction for the Ruhr case. This aligned France with the Italian position, and Paris offered its friendly support to Mussolini and contributed to postponing the discussion in the General Assembly (Milza, 2000, 449-451; Anchieri, 1955a, 382-287). Conversely, the British government, on the one hand, had interests in the Mediterranean area and feared Italian permanence on Corfu and, on the other hand, acted as the defender of the League's role and validity for both the Italian and French cases. In fact, London committed to hindering the Italian ambitions and accelerating and actualizing the Italian withdrawal from Corfu (Anchieri, 1955a, 382-290).

In the final result, French support and a general desire to avoid a definitive rupture in the League allowed Italy to obtain the League of Nations's acquiescence not to

directly intervene in the issue, leaving it to the Conference of Ambassadors to mediate with Greece about the Italian requests. In fact, after the Italian military intervention on Corfu, the Conference of Ambassadors, which had been leading the international commission on which General Tellini and his colleagues had been serving, intervened to find a solution and offered Greece requests that were more reasonable but still close to the initial Italian ultimatum.

Mussolini's plans were accomplished; as reported by Papafloratos in his study,

"(...) Lord Curzon, then Foreign Minister of the British government, had accepted the French plan for the evacuation of Corfu. According to this, the Greek government was found guilty for the murder of the members of Italian delegation. The Greek government should compensate the Italian one without receiving any satisfaction for the murdered refugees from Asia Minor, who were killed by Italian bombs" (Papafloratos, 2015, 271).

The French plan arrived on the day after the Italian government officialised its intransigence in front of the League and was accepted by Italian diplomatic personnel as an unexpected achievement, given the Italian position.

However, it is reported that Mussolini was not satisfied with the resolution and maintained his inflexibility until the issue was completely resolved with the payment of the fifty million lire in exchange for Italian withdrawal from the island. In fact, he insisted on the fact that the Italian honour would have been restored only with the identification and punishment of the felons. Still, given the Greek insistence on the difficulty to find the murderers, in exchange Italy would have accepted the immediate payment of the 50million. Mussolini insisted on the difference between Greece's *acceptance* of this agreement and its *enactment*. Indeed, only the enactment of one of these solutions would have allowed Italy to retreat its troops from Corfu (see DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 183 and following, p. 123).

This point in particular created tension in the relations with London that feared the possibility of an Italian intention to permanently remain on the island. In fact, London was pressing for Italy to leave the island, and under the potential threat of the British fleet (Anchieri, 1955a, 387-388)

On the 26th of September, after Athene declared its payment of the 50million as required by Italy, Mussolini confirmed that Italy was going to maintain its promise and evacuate the island on the following day. The evacuation took place in the set

terms, but further setbacks occurred since it emerged that the Greek order of payment was conditioned to the confirmation of the Aja Court. Mussolini protested and ordered the Italian fleet to turn back to Corfu and remain close to the island.

The issue was officially resolved on the 29th of September, when a telegram from Athene confirmed that the Greek government had definitively completed the payment (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 411, p. 268).

2.2.3 – Current explanations for Italy's assertive stance in the Corfu Incident

Papafloratos, while concluding his review of the Corfu crisis also adds that "Mussolini's new foreign policy appeared to be effective" (Papafloratos, 2015, 271). Conversely, this research, instead of focusing on investigating whether this aggressive strategy worked effectively, the following section will focus on understanding the features characterizing this deviant and assertive international stance and the intentions behind its adoption.

Scholars have already offered some possible explanations for this act, which include Mussolini's inexperience regarding international politics and his personal style in conducting both foreign and domestic politics.

Indeed, according to these references, Mussolini favoured 'direct action', and his decisions pursued 'immediate success' aimed at strengthening the internal consensus. A corollary to these tendencies was also the attitude to make a great show out of any undertaken action or decision (Milza, 2000, 442).

A more detailed examination reports Pierre Milza's account of Mussolini's inexperience¹⁶². In fact, Milza (2000) reports that Mussolini had no idea of how the international system worked and no experience with diplomatic customs; indeed, once he took service as Prime and Foreign Minister, he was trained in diplomatic etiquette. However, according to the author, he meekly apprenticed under the guidance of Mario

¹⁶² The explanations reported here refer first to the personal style of foreign policy characterizing the leader of the new Italian government and, in another variant, to Mussolini's lack of preparation on how to properly address foreign policy. In both cases, the first explanation can be brought back to what chapter 2 (section 2.2.2) mentioned as 'mistakes' that the candidate makes during the implementation of the recognition process. In this specific case, these mistakes are related to differences in the conception of, and perspective on, foreign policy but it is also possible to assimilate them to *mistakes in implementation* (see chapter 2, section 2.2.2) because the Italian diplomatic personnel and administrative staff are reported to have committed to avoiding or at least limiting Mussolini's actions as much as possible.

Pansa – a young official of the Italian Foreign Ministry known as *arbiter elegantiarum* – and of Paolucci de' Calboli, his private secretary (Milza, 2000, 442).

Moreover, as already mentioned, Salvatore Contarini – as General Secretary of Italian Foreign Ministry – was a mentor to Mussolini until January 1926 (when he resigned). This combination and Contarini's experience on foreign policy strategies and management allowed the General Secretary to impose on the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister a foreign policy oriented towards international caution and prudence that favoured friendly relations with all countries, beginning with Yugoslavia and France, Italy's closest neighbours.

On the other hand, this same combination showed its weaknesses, specifically during the Corfu crisis, when Mussolini did not listen to his advisors (Milza, 2000, 448; see also Guariglia, 1950, 12).

With regard to this, the analysis of the diplomatic documents shows a discrepancy between the view of the leader and the view of its collaborators. Indeed, not only Salandra had difficulties in asserting the illegitimacy of the League of Nations on the issue, but also, when the Conference of Ambassadors was dealing with the issue, Romano Avezana wrote to Mussolini to congratulate him on the results. Mussolini's reply showed his inflexibility and his insistence to obtain exactly what he asked for. Mussolini indeed, as reported above, insisted on the difference between Greece's *acceptance* of the agreement and its *implementation*, asking for this last option to be put into effect (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 379, p. 250). In this occasion, both Romano Avezana and Contarini, agreed on the idea that Mussolini was insisting too much, was being excessively intransigent (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 384, p. 252).

It is interesting to report that, in the upcoming days, Mussolini replied to these preoccupations, writing to Romano Avezana to encourage him to hold on to the Italian position,

"Quando alla rassicurazione greca per pagamento 50 milioni ci credo pochissimo. Essenziale è che V.E. tenga assolutamente duro altrimenti riparazioni greche ridurransi alle cerimonie simboliche del Pireo. E questa sarebbe una mistificazione inflitta alla buona fede italiana" (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 384, p. 252).

Therefore, notwithstanding the different visions on the issue, it still emerges a sense of cooperation between the Italian diplomatic corps and its leader.

Another explanation for the assertive Italian behaviours is given by Papafloratos (2015), who highlights the relation between the Fiume issue and the Corfu incident. In fact, the author conducts an interesting study that considers in parallel both issues and highlights the role of Mussolini's assertive and strong stance in the Corfu case as a useful instrument to convince Belgrade to concede the city of Fiume to Italy (see Papafloratos, 2015).

Similarly, Ettore Ancieri (1955a) highlights that in the resolution of the Corfu crisis, Mussolini was the only one dissatisfied; his collaborators were extremely satisfied with what they viewed as Italy's unexpected accomplishments. The author advances the idea that Mussolini was effectively aiming to gain more and that he was hoping to permanently occupy the island of Corfu, as his predecessors had done with the Dodecanese Islands (see Ancieri, 1955a, 393).

With regard to these other two explanations, they can be read as an attempt by the Italian government to improve its power by gaining more possessions. In fact, in both cases, Italy is depicted as aiming at enlarging its borders and territorial possessions. According to Papafloratos, Italy was severe with Greece throughout the Corfu crisis in order to convince Belgrade to cede Fiume to Italy. Similarly, according to Ancieri, Mussolini's strong and inflexible behaviour during the Corfu crisis, and, in particular, his persistence in these behaviours even during the patently and unexpectedly favourable resolution for Italy, is a signal of his greater ambition to add Corfu to Italy's domain.

Not only it is not the intention of this research to attempt to disqualify these possible explanations, but it is possible to add that the Papafloratos interpretation could be extended by including also the relations between Rome and London in those years with regard to the Dodecanese issue. Indeed, many are the messages exchanged on the topic, and also, at the conclusion on the Corfu crisis, there is a certain attention to report on the status on the relations between the two countries and in particular on the Great Britain's reaction to the Italian standing in the situation (see DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 418 and following, p. 274). Therefore, the assertive Italian standing in the Corfu crisis could have served also as a way to measure a lean on Great Britain in favour of Italian requests.

These last readings of the Corfu episode are here taken as good explanatory options that can be considered as compatible with the perspective here advanced: Mussolini

undertook a strong standing and maintained an assertive attitude on the issue, this in order to gain social status. Important element of this advanced perspective is that the assertive standing was accompanied with prosocial and conforming behaviours, and that was aiming at this social goal, to obtain the recognition of Italian great power status.

2.2.4 – Understanding the intentions behind the 1923 Corfu incident

Historiography presents the Corfu crisis as an example of the schizophrenic Italian foreign policy under Mussolini's government.

In line with this, Milza (2000, 448) defines Corfu as the emblematic example of Mussolini's personal attitudes and of his short-sighted perspectives on foreign politics. This because his strong reaction interrupted for, some months, the good relations intercurrent between Rome and London¹⁶³. Milza's perspective underlines that the representatives of the traditional diplomacy (Contarini *in primis*) suggested Mussolini to favour closer relations with Great Britain than with France – which instead contended the Italian interests in the Balkans (Milza, 2000, 447). Therefore, the overreaction to the killings of the Italian generals, represented a breach in these plans¹⁶⁴.

This episode, and in particular the Italian reaction and intransigence towards its resolution, is interesting to this research since it constitutes a public and official act of non-conformity and of assertiveness adopted by a status seeker. Apparently, it also represents a counterproductive decision for Italian foreign policy. This is why, it becomes interesting to investigate its underlying intentions.

It is possible to have a wider perspective on these events by taking into analysis the diplomatic documentation. Indeed, whether from the public discourses reported above it emerged that Mussolini associated this issue with an issue of national prestige and honour, from the diplomatic documents also emerges a peculiar attention on maintaining the situation as quiet as possible, on reassuring that Italy had

¹⁶³ Example of these good relations is the the journey to Rome of King George V (Milza, 2000, 447).

¹⁶⁴ However, in reading these events it is also important to consider that in 1923, Rome and London were discussing about the Dodecanese and that Italy was still aspiring to get its international status as a great power which included the extension of its possessions. Therefore, Italy had contended interests also with Great Britain.

no conflictual intentions and that her occupation of Corfu was lawful since aimed at obtaining satisfaction from Greece.

Some examples can be found, going by order, in the documents Mussolini sent to his collaborators.

On September 1st, 1923 Mussolini sends a telegram to all the Italian diplomatic representatives abroad and to Salandra (Italian delegate at the League of Nations). The message furtherly underlines both the peaceful and lawful characters of the Italian occupation of Corfu. Mussolini writes, "Nel mio telegramma n. 2945 (3) ho precisato il carattere pacifico e provvisorio dell'occupazione di Corfù. Reputo opportuno far presente a V.E. (V.S.) che tale occupazione è pienamente fondata nel diritto delle genti" (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 244, p. 157).

The lawfulness of this act, relates, according to Mussolini, to the fact that the temporary occupation of parts of the territory of the counterpart is listed among the coercive and non-military means available to obtain compensation for the incurred offense.

"L'impossibilità per lo stato offeso di ottenere amichevolmente e con mezzi pacifici soddisfazione giustifica secondo la comune dottrina il ricorso alla violenza adottando mezzi che se pure possono avere apparenze di guerra non hanno affatto carattere bellico ma costituiscono una semplice autoprotezione dei propri interessi. Tra i vari mezzi coercitivi non bellici è compresa la temporanea occupazione di una parte di territorio straniero" (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 244, p. 157).

But, most important, in his message Mussolini reports some historical precedents,

"A tale mezzo ricorse nel 1901 la Francia impossessandosi dell'Isola di Mitilene e delle relative dogane per costringere la Turchia a soddisfare gli impegni assunti verso la ditta Turbini e Dorano"¹⁶⁵ (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 244, p. 157).

On the next day – September 2nd – he sends a telegram to Della Torretta (Italian Ambassador in London) and to Vannutelli (*chargé d'affaires* to Paris) asking both to convince the two governments to support the Italian position in Geneva – regarding the disqualification of the League's jurisdiction. In this occasion, he remarks that the offense suffered by Italy is equivalent to an offense for all the Great Powers –

¹⁶⁵ Many other examples are reported; see DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 244, p. 157.

"Impegnai la dignità e l'onore d'Itali in seguito ad un'offesa che si estende d'altronde indiscutibilmente a tutte le Grandi Potenze" (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 244, p. 160).

He also insists that,

"Il R. Governo non può inoltre in alcun modo accettare una discussion da pari a pari in una questione di onore nazionale con un Governo che gli stessi Governi britannico e francese si sono finora rifiutati di riconoscere" (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 244, p. 157).

This clearly recalls the issue of equality between Rome, Paris and London, and confirms that the Italian stance on this case was related directly with an issue of international status standing.

On the same day of September, Mussolini also sends instructions to his Minister to Athens (Mr. Montagna) advising on how to decrease the tension in the Italian relations to the Greek government (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 249, p. 162).

Similarly, he also writes to his Minister of the Marine, Mr. Thaon di Revel, instructions in order to give the occupation of Corfu a non-warlike character and to provide for the families of the bombing (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 250, p. 163).

Another example of this dedication to stabilize the situation and to avoid tension can also be found in the telegram he sent the same day to the king Vittorio Emanuele III, inviting him to send the usual greetings for Olga's (the Queen of Greece) birthday (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 251, p. 163).

Overall, it is possible to identify in Mussolini's messages to his colleagues an attempt to circumscribe the situation exclusively to the dispute. Indeed, a few days later, on the 6th of September he replies to a telegram by Montagna (Italian Minister to Athens), received on the 5th, regarding the Greek government's official announcements concerning the movement of their fleet in the area of Salamina (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 289, p. 188). The Greek government did officially inform Italy about these movements, declaring also that this distancing of the fleets was done in order to avoid possible tensions with Italy.

Mussolini's reply is interesting exactly because he underlines that there is no war-like-status between Italy and Greece,

"Voglia far conoscere al Governo greco nel modo che riterrà più opportuno che non essendovi né minaccia di guerra né tanto meno stato guerra fra Italia e Grecia, non comprendiamo in che cosa possano interessarci i movimenti della flotta

greca sempre che non abbiano carattere di ostilità contro di noi" (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 296, p. 192).

The last, and very interesting, example of the Italian commitment in circumscribing the situation as much as possible can be found in a telegram that Mussolini sent to Salandra on the 6th of September. The telegram contained instructions on how to behave in the upcoming meeting of the League of Nations.

Recalling that Italy was threatening to leave the League in case its jurisdiction on the case was imposed, it is interesting to read that the Italian leader invites his representative to participate to the League's meeting, this in order not to give the impression that Italy was going to avoid, anyhow, the discussion with the League. The intention is, instead, to show participation and calmness. Indeed, the Italian representative is suggested to participate to the discussions and, if need be, to repeat the Italian intention to leave the League in the case of the imposition of its jurisdiction on the Corfu issue. But Mussolini clearly insists on the fact that the representative had not to add anything else to this content. Moreover, in case of harsh debates, Mussolini invites his delegate to simply leave the room – thus avoiding the exposition to fierce debates,

"Circa seduta assemblea sembrami convenga nostro delegato vi assista in ogni caso per evitare impressione che Italia desideri comunque sottrarsi al dibattito. Nostro delegato Assemblea dovrà tuttavia, regolandosi sull'andamento della discussione, riferirsi serenamente soltanto alle dichiarazioni fatte da V.E. nel Consiglio e, se necessario ripeterle senza allargarle però con argomentazioni d'altro genere. In caso di intemperanza di linguaggio e di escandescenza da parte delegati altri Stati dovrà limitarsi a protestare abbandonando l'aula" (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 294, p. 191).

In conclusion, the attention paid to these small details reveals an underlying intention to limit the Italian deviant behaviours as much as possible, and to delimit them. Indeed, as emerged from the analysis of the diplomatic documentation, the features of this Italian deviant behaviour are its being as limited and circumscribed as possible to the specific case, and its being balanced by compliant behaviours.

Moreover, this combination of socially deviant behaviour and more general prosocial behaviours, was also accompanied by an Italian commitment to reconnect good relations between Italy and Greece. Indeed, a few months after the crisis, Mussolini writes to his representative in Athene to invite him to take contacts with the

Greek government to re-establish good relations between the two countries. This move can be considered as an example of a proactive reconciliatory strategy enacted towards Greece (See DDI, serie VII, vol. II, nn. 570; 574; 575, pp. 396; 398; 399).

Similarly, at the beginning of 1924 Mussolini also normalized relations with Belgrade; the two countries signed a treaty on trade and navigation, which was followed, in July 1925, by the Treaty of Nettuno (Milza, 2000, 457).

In order to complete this analysis, it is possible to furtherly insist on the fact that this international standing adopted by Mussolini can be considered as a deviant behaviour adopted by Italy with strategic and functional intentions aimed being granted the coveted status of great power, this by building on the same declarations made by Mussolini who insists on the fact that this all was about Italian prestige.

While having no intention to deal with the effectiveness of Italian behaviour but aiming at exclusively underlying that this Italian behaviour was about the recognition of Italian prestigious status, it is also possible to report that on September 23rd, 1923, a note is sent to Mussolini reporting Lord Graham's¹⁶⁶ opinion on Mussolini. The reported declarations – reported by an unnamed source – are said to have been stated during a private meeting between the British Ambassador and some of his British colleagues. The Ambassador is said to have expressed a positive opinion about Mussolini¹⁶⁷ and also to have expressed his perspective on the Italian situation after the Corfu and Fiume issues.

"Come avete purtroppo osservato Mussolini ha saputo risolvere brillantemente il conflitto italo-greco secondo le sue aspirazioni e – bisogna convenirne – con nostro svantaggio morale. Prossimamente egli risolverà pure la questione di Fiume in pieno accordo con la Jugoslavia, ed allora l'Italia potrà andare superba per la sua posizione di forza e di sicurezza acquisite di fronte alle altre Nazioni di Europa" (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 397; p. 260).

Of course, the content of this note leaves some doubts concerning its originality – especially given the positive opinions reported in the beginning. However, what is interesting of this comment is not its authenticity, nor the fact that this comment is supposed to come from a British exponent. Even supposing that this note was

¹⁶⁶ Lord Graham is the British Ambassador.

¹⁶⁷ The positive opinion reports that, "Mussolini non è impulsivo come tanti purtroppo credono" (DDI, serie VII, vol. II, n. 397; p. 260).

counterfeit with the purpose to please Mussolini, what is interesting is the perspective that emerges with regard to the Italian management of the Corfu and Fiume issues. The note indeed suggests that the Italian attitude in both these issues will grant Italy a stronger position in front of the European Powers. In other words, Italy will gain popularity status thanks to her behavioural strategy in dealing with both issues.

In line with this evaluation, it is possible to conclude by quoting Milza (2000) who reports that, Antonio Salandra – who as mentioned above was very sceptical about the Italian arguments that the League had no jurisdiction over the Italian occupation of Corfu – is said to have recognized that the Italian threat to leave the League, though 'excessive and impulsive', nevertheless helped Italy find a positive solution within the League itself.¹⁶⁸

Moreover, Salandra is also reported to have written in his memoirs that after Corfu, the Italian prestige had improved (Milza, 2000, 452; Anchieri, 1955a, 384). In his own words,

"[il] prestigio del nome italiano si accrebbe, come sempre si accresce, per un atto di forza compiuto sia pure in difformità delle nuove norme" (Salandra reported in Milza, 2000, 452).

Therefore, leaving aside the implicit evaluations of effectiveness, it is interesting to underline that these comments establish a relation between the assertive behaviours of the Italian foreign policy and the status seeking it was pursuing.

¹⁶⁸ Reported in Anchieri, 1955a, 384.

2.3 – Italian revisionism

Attention will be devoted here to another crucial component of Italian international standing, the Italian revisionist policy.

Between 1923 and 1924, different crucial events took place: at the domestic level the regime has progressed towards a more fascist political system, while at the international level, governments have changed bringing in alterations in the personal relations between leaders. In spring 1924, France saw the election of the radical and socialist left, whose exponents had hostile approach for the fascist regime and its leader. Mussolini himself didn't like the new French political leaders. Certainly, the murder of Matteotti (June 1924) didn't help but embittered the relations between the two countries; and the same was for France's reception of anti-fascist exponents (Milza, 2000, 454-455).

On the other side, with regard to the Italian relations with Great Britain, even if the end of 1923 there was a change in the British parliamentary majority, still the relations between Italy and the Labour party exponents remained positive. Moreover, at the end of 1924, the Conservatives were back in charge and, as Milza (2000) reports, among them numerous were the exponents who wished closer relations with Italy this because the Mussolini's government represented for Great Britain the main obstacle to communism in Europe (Milza, 2000, 455). However, contrasting interests distanced the two countries, indeed, Rome was still harbouring ambitions on the Mediterranean Sea and in the eastern Africa areas, and this clearly hindered its good relations with London, still, 1925 represented the year of closer relations between Italy and Great Britain (Milza, 2000, 455).

More in general it is possible to report that the Italian ambitions collided with the interests of both Great Britain and France.

According to Milza (2000), 1925 was also the year of Italian – *superficial* – adherence to international principles and plans for peace. In October 1925, Mussolini, after Contarini's firm insistence, arrived to Locarno – with four days of delay – in order to participate to the conference where the Locarno Treaties, that aimed at formulating a border guarantee agreement, were negotiated.

Mussolini's reticence came from the fact that these guarantee pacts did not include the Italian border of the Brenner, thus not responding to the Italian fear of a potential Anschluss (Milza, 2000, 457-458).

On Contarini's perspective, notwithstanding the treaty's limitations with regard to the Italian security, still Italy couldn't be absenting from a negotiation that aimed at establishing the basis for the European equilibrium. Therefore, Mussolini joined the Conference¹⁶⁹ but, as reported by Milza, never asked for reassurances on the Brenner borders, fearing to give any possible sign of weakness¹⁷⁰ (Milza, 2000, 457-458).

It is always Milza who reports that the Italian participation to Locarno and its signature of the treaties represented¹⁷¹, at the same time,

"l'apogeo della breve fase di distensione e di cooperazione internazionale vissuta dall'Italia Fascista e il punto di partenza del suo rimettere in discussione i principi della sicurezza collettiva" (Milza, 2000, 457).

Therefore, it is on these basis that 1926 represents, according to historiography, a *sharp turning point* in the Italian strategy for its international standing¹⁷². Since 1926 on, Italy embraced a *revisionist* foreign policy which historians usually identifies having a double outline. Indeed, according to historical studies, Italian revisionism had, around 1926, an *imperial* and *expansionist* characters oriented towards the renegotiation of the partition of colonies and mandates; while from 1927 on (until 1934), the Italian revisionism turned into the so-called *continental* revisionism which instead aimed at leading the group of dissatisfied states that hoped in the revision of peace treaties (Milza, 2000, 459-462).

¹⁶⁹ The participation to this conference, was stressful to Mussolini because he was strongly contested by the journalists (who didn't attend his speeches, but sent, in sign of protest, in the next room) and in general because of his difficulties in setting with the international environment. This unpleasant convinced the Italian leader to never travel abroad – and he will maintain this promise until the end of 1930s (Milza, 2000, 457-459).

¹⁷⁰ In February 1926, take place some verbal clashes between Mussolini, the and South Tyrol and the German representatives, concerning the South Tyrol – and indirectly also the Italian fear of Anschluss.

¹⁷¹ Again, on the same issue, he reports that, "Alla fine del 1925 sembrò dunque che l'Italia aderisse alla politica di distensione e di sicurezza collettiva di cui Briand e Stresemann si erano fatti difensori. Nel corso dei due anni che seguirono la crisi di Corfù, la politica estera mussoliniana fu posta, almeno nelle sue intenzioni ufficiali, sotto il segno del 'raccoglimento' e dell'amicizia internazionale" (Milza, 2000, 459).

¹⁷² The domestic level had its importance, indeed, these were the years of the beginning of the strengthening of the fascists characters of the regime. Referring with this to what in Italian is defined as '*fascistizzazione* del regime' (Milza, 2000, 459-460).

The Italian revisionism was characterized by manifestations of assertive and aggressive behaviours that had different forms.

In the first case, with regard to the imperial revisionism, it mostly manifested through an aggressive rhetoric – examples of which are the declarations of April 1926, when during Mussolini's tour in Tripolitania he made some strong announcements regarding the Italian destiny and willingness to become an empire.

By recalling developmental psychological studies, these Italian behaviours of April 1926 can be associated to examples of *verbal aggressiveness*¹⁷³ manifested through a direct, aggressive and assertive rhetoric.

While with regard to the Italian continental revisionism, the deviant behaviours can be identified precisely in the so-called Italian policy of *encirclement* of Yugoslavia. This Italian policy, recalls the cases of *indirect-relational aggressiveness*¹⁷⁴, addressed by developmental psychological studies. It is indeed possible to identify in this Italian strategy a relational deviant behaviour that aims at harming the social relations of the contender, in this case – as supported by historical studies – the Italian behaviours aimed at harming the French interests in the Danube-Balkan area.

This research addresses these Italian behaviours, because, in contrast with the current IR theory on recognition process which expects status seekers to perform foreign policies in *good citizen*-style (Suzuki, 2008, Italy, that was officially seeking to be granted with the recognition of its great power status, adopted a foreign policy which manifests instead blatant episodes of socially deviant behaviours.

Indeed, Italy under Mussolini's guidance was definitely not behaving as a good and complying citizen, on the opposite, Italian international behaviour was more similar to a rascal.

The problems in the interpretation and analysis of Italian foreign policy are related to the fact that the Italian behaviour was not even conflicting in its entirety: there were some fits of temper, some deviant behaviours but, for years, Italy was neither a good citizen, nor a serious threaten to the system.

The fact that Italian foreign policy, in the 1920s, was constituted by mixed features that don't allow to have a clear-cut understanding renders the Italian revisionism a

¹⁷³ Corresponding to overt-physical aggressiveness, see chapter 3, types of aggressiveness.

¹⁷⁴ See chapter 3, types of aggressiveness.

vantage point from which to look at this blurred and confusing Italian international standing.

This historical period and the episodes composing the Italian revisionism give the possibility to investigate the existence of a relation between deviant behaviours and the Italian status seeking ambitions.

It is possible to interpret the episodes related to Italian revisionism, as aimed at revisionism in itself. Under this perspective, Mussolini threatens with the possibility of an Italian imperial expansion or tackles the Yugoslavian stability in the area because Italy is revisionist. Also, in a more articulated interpretation, Mussolini tackles Belgrade's stability in order to challenge the French interests and influence in the area, but again, the final explanation is that Italy does so because is a revisionist state.

Again, another popular interpretation sees in the Italian assertive behaviours the first signals of the events that will bring to the Second World War, or in alternative it is also possible to simply point at the *schizophrenic* and *contradictory* characters of Italian foreign policy.

On top of this, this research is interested in understanding why Italy behaved as a revisionist state, which were the intentions supporting these internationally deviant behaviours. indeed, the intent is to understand how do these deviant revisionist behaviours relate with Italian status seeking ambitions – if they were implemented *in function* to this aim.

Since historiography distinguishes between the imperial revisionism of 1926 and the continental revisionism that began from 1927, the next sections will follow this articulation, by focussing separately on the two historical episodes.

2.3.1 – The 1926 Italian imperial revisionism

The Italian *expansionist* revisionism and its imperial aspirations have been characterized by what Milza has defined a *strident rhetoric* ("chiassosa retorica", Milza, 2000, 464).

This *strident rhetoric* constitutes the Italian *verbal aggressiveness* that will loudly manifest in the spring of 1926, with the famous speeches about Italian imperial destiny. However, this direct, aggressive and assertive rhetoric begins since the end of 1925, when Mussolini starts being more insistent in recalling the idea of an Italian empire,

and in using empire-related terminologies in his public speeches. This insistence is so much exasperated that in December 1925, in an interview released to the *United Press*, Mussolini is directly asked about these insistent Italian ambitions for an empire (see Susmel, 1958, 44).

(I) – The 1926 declarations about the Italian imperial destiny

Still it is in spring 1926 that this rhetoric reached its peak, during Mussolini's travel to Libya. This episode was defined, after the Corfu crisis, as the 'second international explosion' for Mussolini¹⁷⁵ (Moscatti, 1963b, 101-102).

Indeed, ahead of his travel to Libya, where Italy intended to extend its domain, on March 28th, Mussolini while in Rome, declared to a group of fascists that the Italian impatience will be satisfied and that on that day he will be ready to grab and follow the wheel of destiny¹⁷⁶ (Milza, 2000, 467).

Following on with this style, on the 8th of April, when he boarded on the *Cavour* flagship directed to Tripoli for a tour of the Tripolitania,¹⁷⁷ he began his tour by addressing representatives of the National Fascist Party, with the following words

"(...) Noi siamo mediterranei ed il nostro destino, senza copiare alcuno, è stato e sarà sempre sul mare" (Susmel, 1958, 112).

Once in Tripoli, on the 11th of April, in the afternoon Mussolini, from the balcony of the Castle in the main square in Tripoli, had the occasion to talk to a group of people. Mussolini's words again insist on this rhetoric of the Italian need to have an empire,

"Il mio viaggio non deve essere interpretato come un atto di ordinaria amministrazione. Intendo che esso sia come è nei fatti un'affermazione della forza del popolo italiano (*acclamazioni*), una manifestazione di potenza del popolo che da Roma ripete le proprie origini e porta il Littorio trionfante ed immortale di Roma sulle rive del mare africano.

È il destino che ci spinge verso questa terra. Nessuno può fermare il destino e

¹⁷⁵ "(...) venne definita, dopo Corfù, la 'seconda esplosione estera' di Mussolini" (Moscatti, 1963b, 101-102).

¹⁷⁶ In his original words Mussolini declares "che egli sarebbe stato là per 'afferrare la ruota del destino quando passerà a portata delle nostre mani'" (*Il Popolo d'Italia*, 29 marzo 1926; quoted in Milza, 2000, 467).

¹⁷⁷ A few days before Mussolini had survived to an attempt of assassination (Milza, 2000, 465).

soprattutto nessuno può spezzare la nostra incrollabile volontà" (Susmel, 1958, 114).

From these speeches, the Italian strident rhetoric sounds quite challenging for the *status quo*. Mussolini mentions Italian strength and willingness, he defines them firm and steady. And he also talks about the Italian readiness to grasp the opportunity to realize the Italian imperial ambitions.

The spirit of these declarations can be better understood when reporting that always in the first days of April 1926, Italian newspapers paid large attention to the news concerning some Italian military (naval) preparations in the ports of Ancona and Bari and also in Rhodes – in front of the eastern coasts of the Turkish Asia Minor (Milza, 2000, 467).

This news was officially denied by the Stefani press agency, on the 24th of April, but this didn't prevent Turkey from manifesting preoccupation (see, DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 298, p. 215). Responding to these fears, on the 29th of April, Mussolini informed Ankara that they had no serious reasons why to fear the Italian foreign politics (Milza, 2000, 466-467; Moscati, 1963b; 102).

But still, on top of this, at the end of April 1926, Italo Balbo – then Secretary of State for the Air Forces – flew over Tunisia and visited the Italian colonies and schools, underlining at his return to Italy that the Italian patriotic love was higher than ever during his visit (Milza, 2000, 467).

These were the main signals of the Italian assertive rhetoric on its imperial ambitions, and they were followed by signals of Italian withdrawal towards more peaceful attitudes, see for example the Senate speech on foreign politics held by Mussolini on the 28th of May, 1926.

(II) – Contextualizing the Italian ambitions: Italy is a frustrated great power with a revisionist foreign policy

As mentioned above, this all has to be read from a perspective that considers the fact that Italy was still struggling with having her expansionist interests satisfied. This Italian situation persists also in the spring of 1926, when Italy committed into avoiding the concretization of her fear of being excluded from an eventual division of

the Turkish area – in case of a collapse of the central government in Ankara (see, DDI, serie VII, vol. IV).

Moreover, in a situation in which the Ankara government was not stable, Italy had a clear clue about its being marginalized by France and Great Britain who shared common interest in the area.

Della Torretta, the Italian Ambassador in London, on the 29th of May reports on the British perspective on the Turkish situation. He writes an interesting report to Mussolini explaining that Great Britain is taking advantage of Ankara's instability to negotiate its interests on Mosul (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 296; 320, pp. 211; 232). In his report, he recalls that the British representatives assert that for the moment the situation is calm and that it is everyone's interest to maintain a stable government in Ankara. But, what interests Italy is the case in which instability prevails and a crisis opens in Turkey. Della Torretta indeed, reports that he directly addressed his British colleague with this issue,

"Essendomi state espresse anche da Tyrrell queste preoccupazioni [riguardanti la stabilità del governo turco], gli ho chiesto che cosa, secondo lui, sarebbe accaduto se dovesse aprirsi una grande crisi in Turchia ed in qual modo le potenze più interessate in oriente potrebbero far fronte ad una nuova grave situazione che sorgesse da un momento all'altro" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 320, p. 232).

The answer that Della Torretta received from the British Undersecretary of State recalls an idea of balance and equality between the three European powers – Italy, France and Great Britain. Directly quoting from the report,

"Sotto segretario di stato mi ha risposto che in tale eventualità Roma, Parigi e Londra dovrebbero subito concertarsi per trovare una linea di condotta, e che anche in vista dell'ipotesi, sia pure remota, da me prospettata, sia estremamente desiderabile che fra Roma e Parigi si consolidasse uno spirito di cordiale collaborazione.

Tale risposta del signor Tyrrell contiene tutto il pensiero del Governo britannico, e che cioè le grandi questioni internazionali possono essere solo risolte mediante l'intesa e la collaborazione dei gabinetti di Londra, Roma e Parigi; e che specialmente per l'oriente, che involve così gravi interessi delle tre grandi potenze mediterranee, nulla è possibile fare senza un'intesa anglo-itala-francese" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 320, p. 232).

Yet this friendly answer that refers to a common intervention in the area leaves Della Torretta with some doubts this because, as he reports, from his point of view the

British and French interests are so aligned to each other, that it will be impossible for Italy to reach an agreement with London, without Paris's previous consensus¹⁷⁸.

With regard to this interconnection between the three powers, and in order to better understand Della Torretta's opinion, it is possible to also recall another diplomatic document from the 20th of April, 1926.

On that day, Mussolini wrote to Romano Avezana – Italian Ambassador to Paris – reporting his opinions with regard to the possibilities of an agreement between Rome and Paris. Mussolini writes that,

"Non è dubbio ·Che esiste possibilità accordo e intesa molto stretta e concreta purchè sia preceduta dalla favorevole soluzione delle questioni cui V. E. accenna e cioè Tunisi, Tangeri, Abissinia, mandati coloniali, fuorusciti, trattato commercio. Autorizzo quindi V. E. ad agire energicamente in tal senso" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 303, p. 218).

Therefore, from these internal documents it clearly emerges that Italy was in a situation in which it tried to convince both Great Britain and Paris to satisfy the Italian aspirations.

Indeed, returning at Della Torretta's report of the 29th of May, it is possible to find a linearity between his analysis of the Italian situation and this emerging context.

He indeed, reports on the situation of Italian interests and ambitions in Asia Minor,

"Per quanto riguarda più particolarmente le aspirazioni italiane in Asia Minore riassumo risultato delle mie indagini compiute tanto nei vari circoli politici che al Foreign Office.

È ormai entrato nella coscienza generale che l'Italia ha degli interessi vitali da far valere nel Mediterraneo Orientale, che il continuo aumento di popolazione l'obbliga fatalmente a procurarsi nuovi sbocchi ove dirigere la sua emigrazione - che le maggiori possibilità sono offerte dall'Anatolia - che in questa direzione sono rivolte le aspirazioni italiane e che queste aspirazioni meritano simpatia. Contemporaneamente, però, l'Inghilterra è dominata da un desiderio di pace e tranquillità, e sovrasta soprattutto una ferma volontà d'arrivare ad un consolidamento della vita internazionale che consenta lo svolgersi e l'attivarsi degli

¹⁷⁸ "Da mia parte devo aggiungere che, per quanto riguarda Francia ed Inghilterra, esse hanno ormai tale una somma di interessi comuni in oriente derivanti dalla loro rispettiva situazione politica e geografica nei paesi a mandato (Irak, Siria, Palestina) che ciò le obbliga ad una continua collaborazione ed intesa per far fronte a situazioni spesso assai delicate.

Ne deriva come naturale conseguenza che oggi, così stando le cose, non sembrerebbe possibile, in linea di massima, avviare una intesa particolare italo-inglese per l'oriente, senza la contemporanea partecipazione del Governo di Parigi. (Questa parte risponde agli accenni verbalmente fattimi in proposito da V. E.)" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 320, p. 232).

scambi commerciali. Conseguentemente, malgrado le favorevoli disposizioni che senza dubbio esistono verso le nostre necessità ed aspirazioni, ogni azione o atteggiamento italiano che potesse essere causa di un perturbamento dell'ordine e della pace, solleverebbe tali correnti di opinione pubblica ostili all'Italia, da obbligare Governo ad assumere una attitudine a noi contraria. A conferma di quanto precede ho potuto constatare la viva soddisfazione provata dal Foreign Office quando ebbe notizia delle dichiarazioni ordinate da V. E. al R. ambasciatore a Costantinopoli intese a calmare le apprensioni turche" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 320, p. 232).

His conclusions report that, notwithstanding London's benevolence with regard to the Italian interests in the area, still the British main interest remains the maintenance of stability in the area. Therefore, any possible Italian action that may disrupt the stability and serenity in the areas is disregarded by London. Therefore, once more, it emerges that the Italian interests are subordinated both the British and French ones, and that they have not been satisfied yet.

Undoubtedly the last lines of Della Torretta's report, refer to the strong declarations made by Mussolini in April – indeed, Della Torretta also mentions that Great Britain has greatly appreciated the Italian efforts to reassure Turkey about its peaceful intentions.

By recalling the fact that Italy's main international ambition was to be recognized as a great power and that the possession of her own empire and the extension of her areas of interest were part of these ambitions; by building on historical reports and documents, it emerges that in 1926 the Italian ambitions were still pending. This because its ambitions to become a great power, to be recognized and treated as such, haven't been satisfied yet.

Therefore, by adopting Suzuki's terminology¹⁷⁹, it is possible to conclude that Italy in 1926 was a *frustrated great power* that was still pursuing its status seeking ambitions – to become a great power, granted with her empire and respected by her peers.

This all constitutes a contextual frame in which to understand the Italian assertive rhetoric on its imperial ambitions.

The main point to this research is that, contrary to the current IR theoretical framework on recognition process, historical reports and documents show that Italy in order to pursue this ambition, did not commit into an exclusively compliant behaviour.

¹⁷⁹ See Suzuki, 2008.

On the opposite, it clearly emerges that Italy was attempting to pursue its status seeking ambitions through a particular type of behavioural strategy which was quite different from social compliance.

(III) – Understanding Italian assertive behaviours

Moving to the analysis, and understanding, of the Italian deviant behaviours it is interesting to report that, departing from the current IR theoretical perspective on recognition process and status seeking, historians as well have recognized that the aim of this *verbal aggressiveness* was to test the reaction of the main actors of the international scene – this next to the intent of strengthening the internal consensus (Milza, 2000, 464). Indeed, Milza asserts that this could have been a plausible intent, this because,

"Nel momento in cui vengono pronunciate queste parole, Mussolini non ha alcuna possibilità d'imporre alle due principali potenze coloniali l'*inesorabile volontà* del *popolo italiano*" (Milza, 2000, 464).

Again, according to Milza (2000), in a similar situation what remained to Mussolini was to strengthen the Italian small possessions and to try to obtain colonial compensations by adopting a balancing game, with various means of pressure (Milza, 2000, 465).

"[Mussolini] egli aveva avviato su parecchi fronti un'offensiva destinata ad agitare da un capo all'altro l'area mediterranea, in modo da approfittare di un eventuale mercanteggiamento tra le potenze coinvolte. Si trattava, con diverse pressioni e con manovre deterrenti, di ottenere compensazioni per i vantaggi territoriali concessi alla Gran Bretagna e alla Francia dai trattati di pace o, in altri termini, di indurre i due principali beneficiari del rimescolamento delle carte in Africa e nel Mediterraneo ad accettare la 'revisione' dello *status quo* che avevano imposto" (Milza, 2000, 466).

Therefore, historical studies as well contradict, with regard to this case, the expectations that want status seekers, even in a condition of *frustration* (see Suzuki, 2008), to insist on performing exclusively conforming behaviours. On the opposite, Italy pursuing its imperial ambitions through a *verbal aggressive rhetoric*.

This research advances that, still in 1926, since Italy was a status seeker and was still aiming at the satisfaction of its expansive interests that were symbols of its great power status, in this situation, the Italian aggressive rhetoric on its desired and

deserved empire was a socially deviant behaviour that aimed at obtaining the recognition of this social status.

To illustrate this, it is possible to underline two passages: first, that these deviant behaviours were limited in their extension and were combined with a more general complying attitude; and second, that this Italian aggressive rhetoric was functional to Italian status seeking.

By building on the asserted Italian lack of material capacities¹⁸⁰, it is possible to add that the above-mentioned Italian aggressive declarations on its imperial destiny, for how assertive may have sounded, still were set in a series of other declarations which aimed at underlining their rhetorical character¹⁸¹.

Indeed, not only Italy manifested a reconciliatory behaviour¹⁸² in reassuring the Turkish fears with regard to the Italian intentions in the area, and also in stating in front of the Italian Senate an official *profession of peaceful intentions*.

Furthermore, Mussolini himself made different declarations stressing what he called the *real significance* of the Italian imperial ambitions¹⁸³. As an example, it is possible to mention two cases.

The first one to be mentioned here is the foreign policy speech to the Senate that Mussolini gave on the 28th of May, 1926.

Mussolini speaks in front of the Senate, reporting on foreign policy, and declaring that Italy was not pursuing any aggressive imperialism (Milza, 2000, 468).

In Mussolini's own words, answering to the critics that have suspected that the Italian imperialist policy was aggressive,

¹⁸⁰ By recalling the episode of the Italian military operations of April 1926, and the fact that this threaten was implemented mostly via newspapers' publications, it could also be possible to advance that, it was precisely the lack of material capacities that held Italy back from adopting more *physically aggressive deviant behaviours*.

¹⁸¹ In line with this it is possible to mention that Bosworth (1991b) underlines that Italy has always been the weakest great power among its European peers and that due to this structural weakness, Italian power and international authority were built through the *narrative*.

¹⁸² In line with this reconciliatory approach it is possible to mention that on September 30th, 1926, Mussolini will meet Chamberlain in Livorno, and that the official press release will strongly underline the persistence of good relations between Rome and London (Moscatti, 1963b, 103).

¹⁸³ These clarifications are valid exclusively for this precise moment, while Italian effective capture of its empire, in 1936, has to be specifically analysed.

"(...) l'imperialismo italiano è un fenomeno di dignità del popolo italiano. Prima di tutto dignità morale. E poi è il bisogno di espansione economica e morale di una nazione che è arrivata un po' tardi. Quando un popolo entra dove tutti sono già sistemati suscita un po' di disagio. L'ospite inatteso è qualche volta ingrato" (Susmel, 1958, 151-152).

Again, insisting on the fact that Italian imperialism is not aggressive¹⁸⁴,

"Ora il nostro imperialismo non esiste nel senso di un imperialismo aggressivo, esplosivo, che prepara la guerra. Debbo dichiarare, non per voi onorevoli senatori, che seguite da vicino la politica estera del Governo, ma per il mondo, per tutto il mondo, che il Governo fascista segue e non seguire che una politica di pace; (...). Ma il volere la pace non significa intanto essere disarmati" (Susmel, 1958, 151-152).

Notwithstanding these loud declarations of this Italian profession of peace, it could be possible to maintain that, being this speech subsequent to the April's declarations and events, Mussolini may have lowered and decreased the content of its real intentions.

In line with this view, it is possible to report Milza's analysis of these 1926 events. He writes that,

"Abbandonato dagli inglesi che, ottenuta soddisfazione nell'affare di Mossul, gli prodigavano ormai consigli di moderazione (soprattutto durante il colloquio del 20 aprile, a Roma, tra Dino Grandi e il segretario permanente del Foreign Office Sir William Tyrrel), criticato dai senatori americani in occasione del dibattito per la ratifica degli accordi italo-americani sui debiti di guerra, violentemente attaccato dalla stampa turca, Mussolini non impiegò molto a battere in ritirata" (Milza, 2000, 467).

Considering that these declarations were made in May, one month after all the aggressive rhetoric, it is credible to imagine that Mussolini may have lowered the aggressiveness of its rhetoric due to the public international reaction.

This notwithstanding, there is another public declaration made by Mussolini that confirms this same content and that was made long before the April 1926 events.

¹⁸⁴ It is interesting to report that Moscati (1963b) asserts that this prevalence of Italian aggressive rhetoric on effective actions towards any conquer of an Italian empire, was related to the internal and domestic situation. Indeed, he writes, "[M]ai i fattori della politica interna si riverberano con tanta forza sui rapporti con l'esterno come negli anni di assestamento di una dittatura, tutta intesa, per ovvie esigenze, a ricercare nel 'rumore' derivante da un'impostazione ambiziosa della propria politica estera una fonte di consenso all'interno. (...) Di qui una politica fatta più di generiche affermazioni imperialistiche e di velleità di espansione che volta a perseguire concreti interessi" (Moscati, 1963b, 104).

Indeed, it is also possible to report here the above-mentioned interview that Mussolini released in December 1925 to the *United Press* (see Susmel, 1958, 44).

In this interview, Mussolini was directly asked about his insistence on the Italian ambitions for an empire (see Susmel, 1958, 44).

"Qual è il pensiero di V.E. circa l'impero italiano, cui V.E. ha alluso parecchie volte nei suoi discorsi? Quali sarebbero gli aspetti politici, geografici, militari ed economici dell'impero?" (Susmel, 1958, 44).

Mussolini's answer is interesting because begins with a distinction on the meanings of the word 'empire'. Empire, says Mussolini, can refer to a form of governmental organization, but it can also refer to the strength and *power* of a country.

"La parola 'impero' non ha un solo significato nella lingua italiana. Essa può designare una forma di Governo e più particolarmente quella meravigliosa organizzazione statale che da Roma, nei primi secoli dell'era cristiana, dominò il mondo civile. Ma 'impero' significa anche forza possente, dominio, comando. L'impero, come volontà di vita e di potenza, è alla base di tutti gli organismi viventi" (Susmel, 1958, 44).

Therefore, in his words, talking about an Italian empire does not refer to any territorial conquest, but instead it refers to a propensity, a tenacious and pugnacious (when needed) Italian aptitude in dealing with international issues.

"Allorché si parla dunque di un'Italia imperiale, non si allude a nessuna determinata conquista territoriale, ma ad un'attitudine, a una norma di condotta virile, risoluta, combattiva se occorre, che l'Italia deve osservare nei grandi problemi" (Susmel, 1958, 44).

Mussolini himself links this Italian imperial aspiration to the Italian status seeking ambitions,

L'importanza dell'Italia fra le altre nazioni d'Europa, i suoi grandi sacrifici nella guerra mondiale, la sua esuberante popolazione, tutto le dà diritti ad una maggiore espansione nel mondo. È stolto chi vede in tali direttive un proposito aggressivo: non mancano nella storia accordi di divisioni pacifiche, mediante le quali le potenze raggiunsero un più saldo e giusto equilibrio tra le forze rispettive e salvaguardarono la pace e la tranquillità dei loro popoli. Confido che non mancherà all'Italia, allorché se ne presenterà l'occasione, il mezzo di ottenere con transazioni la giusta parte che le spetta. Gli altri popoli assumerebbero una grave responsabilità,

opponendo una pervicace resistenza alle misurate aspirazioni dell'Italia perché sia garantito il suo avvenire di grande potenza"¹⁸⁵ (Susmel, 1958, 44).

In conclusion, to be clear, there is of course no intention to claim that the Italian imperialistic ambitions did not exist and were exclusively rhetoric.

On the opposite, the intention of this research is to understand the adoption of Italian deviant and assertive behaviours.

Under this perspective it is possible to understand Mussolini's insistence on the peaceful character of Italian imperialism not in a literal sense, but as a reference to the fact that the observed Italian deviant behaviours – which in this case are mostly manifested through an aggressive rhetoric – are functional to the Italian status seeking ambitions. Deviance is used in function of obtaining recognition, it aims at adjusting the system, but not at overturning it.

The declarations made for this interview clearly refer to this, Italian assertive behaviours are part of the international standing it has to maintain, thus in order to convince its peers to grant Italy with the aimed great power status – "perché sia garantito il suo avvenire di grande potenza" (Susmel, 1958, 44).

Coming full circle, this confirms that Italy seeks its prestige (reputational status) by incorporating its behaviour this aggressive rhetoric.

¹⁸⁵ Da il Popolo d'Italia, N. 303, 22 dicembre 1925, XII. See, Susmel, 1958, 44.

2.3.2 – The Italian continental revisionism

Historiography reports that from 1926-1927 until 1934, Italy stood in the international scene as a revisionist actor. Italian revisionism has been multifaceted, indeed next to the above-mentioned aggressive rhetoric on Italian imperialism Italy has also pursued other forms of assertive behaviours. Indeed, around the end of 1926 Mussolini has started implementing a so-called continental revisionism that has challenged Belgrade's stability and caused a breach in the French alliance with the Little Entente (Milza, 2000, 468).

Another important character of Italian revisionism consisted in the fact that Mussolini directly proposed Italy as the leader of revisionism in Europe, this by advancing a rhetoric that turned around the idea of the revisionism of treaties, and also by implementing behaviours that seemed to directly tackle the European stability.

(I) – Italian revisionism in the Balkans: surrounding Yugoslavia and contrasting the Small Entente

This strategy manifested mainly through a series of agreements concluded by Italy that directly tackled Belgrade's sphere of stability and security.

Enlarging a bit the perspective, it is possible to state that the first signals of this strategy can be found in the closer relations that Italy developed with Albania since the spring of 1926, that, at the end of the same year, resulted into an agreement between the two.

Yet the most important sign of Italian continental revisionism is usually identified in the signature of the amity and conciliatory treaty that Italy signed with Hungary on the 4th of April, 1927 (Moscati, 1963b, 109-110). Though this agreement was not a formal alliance, still it represented an important step in Mussolini's strategy. It represented the clearest signal of the Italian encirclement and isolation of Yugoslavia within the Balkan region also because ahead of its signature Mussolini made public his opposition to the constitution of the Small Entente.

Relations between Rome and Belgrade continued being discordant, and in this situation Yugoslavia turned to Paris to negotiate an amity treaty that will be signed in

November 1927. Mussolini gave instructions to protest with Chamberlain that France was surrounding Italy with this agreement and its projects with the Little Entente.

As more concrete reply to this treaty, on November 22nd, 1927, Mussolini signed the Second Treaty of Tirana that officially established a twenty-years 'unalterable defensive alliance' between the two countries. This turned Albania into an Italian satellite, and officially represented the Italian encirclement of Belgrade.

1928 opened with the discussions between Italy and Yugoslavia on the possibility that Italy could grant Belgrade with more time in order to give its parliament the chance to ratify the Treaty of Nettuno. This agreement was confirmed on the 1st of February (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 77, p. 75). Italy kept on advancing its relations with Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey (February (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 83; 88; 108; 116; 120; following). While Yugoslavia tried to associated the Italian-Yugoslav relations with the Italian-French negotiations (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 105).

Yet, the most paradigmatic episode that is usually associated to the Italian revisionism is the Senate speech on foreign policy that Mussolini held on the 5th of June, 1928 (Susmel, 1958, 158-193), in which he re-affirms the Italian official adhesion to *revisionism* by again insisting on the idea that though the peace treaties are inviolable, still they are not eternal, nor perfect and not even immutable (Susmel, 1958, 1776-177).

(II) – Current explanations to Italian revisionism

The Italian adhesion to revisionism remains a point of debate for scholars and analysts. What emerges from this debate is the difficulty to cope with the ambiguities of this Italian behaviour. Pillar to this discussion is the counter-productivity of this Italian strategy that will manifest on the long term – first of all with regard to Italian security itself¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸⁶ In line with this, historians underline that one of the most contradictory elements of Italian international standing ahead of 1930s, can be found in Mussolini's behaviour with regard to South Tyrol and the possibilities of Anschluss' realization. The idea is that Mussolini called for the revisionism of treaties when it was about favouring the Italian national interests, but this same principle has favoured the violation of Austrian borders.

Actually, in February 1926, Mussolini took a very strong stance against any possibility of German interference with the Italian borders. However, Mussolini's declaration that "L'Italia non subirà mai violazioni di quei trattati di pace che le garantiscono le frontiere conquistate a prezzo di durissimo sangue" (Mussolini, quoted in Milza, 2000, 476), easily

More in general, the debate on Italian revisionism builds on the idea that Italy should have favoured friendly relations with Yugoslavia. Various are the motivations that weigh in favor Italy's maintenance of good relations with Yugoslavia, and Milza reports some of them,

"In linea di principio, una gran quantità di ragioni avrebbe dovuto indurre il Duce a mantenere con Belgrado rapporti di buon vicinato. Col trattato di Roma l'Italia aveva ottenuto soddisfazione su numerosi punti, e in particolar modo sulla questione di Fiume, risolta nel modo più conforme agli interessi dello Stato fascista. Benché dovesse tener conto dell'irredentismo sloveno, il governo del re Alessandro appariva disposto a riconoscere in modo definitivo le frontiere italo-jugoslave, ad accordarsi con Mussolini per una difesa comune dell'Adriatico e per ostacolare eventuali pressioni tedesche sulle frontiere settentrionali dei due paesi, a intensificare le relazioni commerciali con l'Italia e a riconoscere a questa potenza una posizione economica dominante in Albania. In cambio si aspettava dalla sua vicina che cessasse di sostenere il revisionismo ungherese e bulgaro, come pure il movimento separatista croato e quello macedone" (Milza, 2000, 469).

On top of this, Milza concludes that "saggezza avrebbe voluto che Mussolini giocasse con Belgrado la carta del *do ut des*; e questo implicava che si schierasse dalla parte degli Stati rispettosi dei trattati" (Milza, 2000, 469). But, on the opposite, Mussolini chose not to do so and to opt for the revisionist path in his foreign policy.

This research is interested in understanding why did Italy at that time undertake a similar behaviour towards its neighbours – how to understand this apparently schizophrenic behaviour?

With regard to this, it is possible to begin by reporting here some of the explanations that have been articulated in the historical studies.

The first one, and one of the most popular, builds on the idea that since Contarini left his office, the gap between Mussolini and the traditional diplomacy became permanent, implicating the definitive absence of a strategy in the subsequent Italian foreign policy. Other options that can be mentioned concern the effectiveness of Italian economic interests and the prevalence of the domestic level on the international one, thus implying that Mussolini was looking for international actions that could have immediate effect on the Italian public opinion.

appears as contradictory. On this point, Milza writes that, "Era impossibile appellarsi con più cinismo o incoscienza al rispetto dell'ordine internazionale in un caso, alla sua revisione e alla sua sovversione nell'altro" (Milza, 2000, 476).

Finally, the last perspective here reported identifies a relation between Italian attitude towards Belgrade and the Balkans, and Italian relations with Paris. The general idea, that will be extensively dealt in the following sections, is that Italy tackled Belgrade in order to put pressure on Paris.

Moving from the first explanation, under this perspective, 1926 is reported as the year of a growing distance between fascism and the Italian traditional diplomacy (Moscati, 1963b, 100). Contarini himself resigned from his position preferring to retire from politics, therefore this year is reported also the year of a growing distance between fascism and the Italian traditional diplomacy (Moscati, 1963b, 100).

The break between Contarini and Mussolini implied, under this perspective, serious repercussions on the Italian foreign policy.

"[V]enne a mancare, nel corso del 1926, un orientamento preciso per i rapporti dell'Italia con le altre potenze, si accentuò l'idea generica dell'espansione dell'Italia in qualsiasi direzione e in qualsiasi momento, senza obiettivi preordinati e ben definiti, prese corpo una speciale forma di revisionismo, per il momento ancora pacifico, come manifestazione di velleità insoddisfatte e di ambizioni troppo a lungo inculcate e represses" (Moscati, 1963b, 103-104).

Milza explains this historical crossroad, by recalling that since Contarini was not Mussolini's mentor anymore, and since Mussolini resented the idea of following the liberal political tradition – perfectly expressed in the Contarini and Sforza style (Milza, 2000, 469-470) – this was the definitive occasion for a change of Italian diplomatic style.

The Sforza and Contarini approach to the Balkan-area provided that the Italian economic interests in the area had to be achieved through friendly relations and agreements with Yugoslavia, this in order to contend the French primacy in the area. In line with this, the traditional approach to the Adriatic relations was to avoid that any other agreement, and especially the Italian-Albanian relations, could alter and irritate the relation between Rome and Belgrade (Moscati, 1963b, 108).

1926, indeed represents the moment in which the Contarini-style approach to Balkans was put aside in favour of a more revisionist approach (Moscati, 1963b, 100).

"Alla politica che faceva perno sull'amicizia e collaborazione con la Jugoslavia si va sostituendo, nel corso del 1926, la politica che mira a stringere alleanze con gli altri Stati balcanici in funzione anti-jugoslava" (Moscati, 1963b, 100).

A role was also played by Mussolini's 'personal inclination for action', and by his strong anti-Slovenian feeling¹⁸⁷ (Milza, 2000, 469-470).

It is possible to claim that this perspective sees a crossroad in Contarini's resignation, and that, more in general, this builds on a perspective that distinguishes two lines of action within the same foreign policy: Contarini on the one side and Mussolini on the other. With regard to this it is possible to Moscati's analysis that challenges this binomial perspective,

"(...) il binomio Mussolini-Contarini. Giacché, è bene precisarlo sin da ora, non è esatto ed è troppo comodo scindere le due responsabilità e definire come 'contariniano' tutto quel che di buono vi poté essere nella politica estera del primo periodo fascista, e come 'mussoliniano' tutto il male. Naturalmente in Mussolini, preminente era l'interesse per il successo immediato, anche soltanto apparente, che servisse a consolidare con un prestigio, sia pure formale, acquisito all'estero, le posizioni interne del fascismo; nei suoi collaboratori c'era invece uno sforzo continuo e più meditato per convogliare l'esuberante attività del ministro degli esteri verso risultati permanenti. Ma mai disaccordo palese: la politica estera di quegli anni (...) appariva all'esterno un insieme organico, in cui potevano fondersi ed integrarsi diverse passioni, ben diversa preparazione, contrastanti attitudini che, sotto forme diverse, perseguivano un identico fine" (Moscati, 1963°, 81).

Perfectly in line with this, also Biagini insists on elements of continuation between the two. In his own words,

"Con l'allontanamento di Contarini la storiografia tende a datare l'inizio di una politica estera 'fascista', ma anche nel periodo contariniano si erano manifestati gli orientamenti e i metodi propri del fascismo rivolti a una revisione generale della politica italiana: dall'incontro di Territet alla crisi della Ruhr all'episodio di Corfù" (Biagini, 1980, 181).

Therefore, it emerges that there was a certain unitary character in the Italian foreign policy and that this was pointing at a common aim. Returning to Moscati, he clearly asserts that his common aim was represented by the pursuing of Italian prestige,

"Tale [identico] fine era una rivalutazione dell'azione diplomatica italiana, una maggiore libertà d'azione, una politica estera di più ampio respiro, che, pur basandosi in effetti sull'accordo con l'Inghilterra e con la Francia, ne sfruttasse di volta in volta i contrasti e, propugnando al tempo stesso il reinserimento degli Stati

¹⁸⁷ As further contributing factors are also reported: the behavior of fascists from Istria and Veneto that was, since the beginning, very warmongering. Milza also says that the Italian General Staff did press in order to increase military spending and army personnel, and that this too had a role (Milza, 2000, 469-470)

vinti nell'economia europea, desse all'Italia un maggior prestigio specie nei Balcani e nel Medio Oriente e più ampie possibilità nel continente africano" (Moscati, 1963°, 81-82).

Biagini as well underlines that the harmony between the two components of Italian diplomacy, can also be seen in the fact that, during Contarini's years as well, "Mussolini non aveva tralasciato occasione per porre il problema della ridefinizione del ruolo e degli interessi dell'Italia come grande potenza mediterranea nell'ambito dei rapporti con gli alleati e con la Società delle nazioni" (Biagini, 1980, 181).

Therefore, it is possible to underline a certain harmony, at least in the final intents of Italian foreign policy.

Another element that is reported to have influenced the Italian behaviours towards Yugoslavia, refers to the effective existence of Italian economic interest in the Balkan area, in general. With regard to this, Moscati reports that the main reason that induced Italy to sign the treaty with Hungary relates to its interests to extend the Italian political and economic influence in the Balkans.

Moreover, the author also recalls that, in the area, there was an economic competition between Rome and Paris, which was quite relevant. Indeed, France at that time had established an important level of economic influence in the area, and Italy aspired to content it (Milza, 2000, 469-470).

Moreover, adding to this perspective, Yugoslavia, represented for Mussolini an obstacle to the Italian influence over Albania – that Mussolini wanted to turn into an influence that went behind the economic level (Milza, 2000, 469-470).

Next to this, it is also possible to mention another issue that constitutes a pivotal debate: the prevalence of domestic politics on foreign politics. This perspective points at the fact that the Italian-fascist revisionist approach to foreign affairs was suitable to support nationalistic exaltations. This is to say that the Italian foreign policy had these assertive features because they were easily expendable with the propaganda. The debate on the prevalence of domestic affairs on the international one, is quite substantial.

Certainly, it is understandable the idea that national affairs proved important in the establishment of a regime, and in order to provide a more balanced perspective that includes these to – only apparently alternative – options, it is possible to refer to Moscati who underlines the *virtuous circle* that characterized this approach. Indeed,

what Mussolini pursued for domestic reasons, still payed back at the international level by assigning to Italy the role of leader of the revisionist countries, which again had a further positive effect on internal politics by strengthening the nationalistic perception of the central Italian role on the international arena (Moscati, 1963b, 110).

Finally, it is possible to insert the Italo-Yugoslavian relations in a wider framework that includes Italo-French relations and their contrasting interests.

This perspective builds on the idea that Italy and France had competitive interests, and on top of this, the better way to destabilize the French interests was to establish, in the Danube-Balkan area a series of agreements that tackled the Yugoslavian stability as proxy way to tackle the French interests.

Above it was mentioned that Rome and Paris had common economic interests in the Balkan area; this last perspective asserts that competitive interests between the two were more than economic.

The context in which this perspective is inserted provides that the relations between Italy and France had been friendly until 1925, when they have started worsening for various reasons among which there was the ideological and personal incompatibility between the two governments – the aversion between the leftist French governments and the Italian fascism. Directly related was also the issues with the Italian antifascist exponents that found hospitality in France, from where they were able to continue their political engagement (Moscati, 1963b, 105); the anti-French attitude of the Italian press, and *vice versa*; and also, Paris' refusal to grant Italy with the any minimal colonial concession (Milza, 2000, 471; Moscati, 1963b, 105).

Adding to this perspective, it is possible to advance that – even though it was reported above that the tensions between Rome and Paris with regard to the Balks grew after the signature of the Italian treaty with Hungary, and the following one between Yugoslavia and France, to which followed, in a sort of escalation, the one between Italy and Albania – still this escalating conflictual relation can be dated back to the beginning of 1926, when Italy strongly protested any possibility of an agreement between Paris and Belgrade (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 262; 271, p. 186; 196).

Indeed, it is since March 1926 that Mussolini gives instructions to the Italian representatives in Paris, London and Belgrade to inform Chamberlain, Briand and Nincich,

"che qualora si addivenga subito alla firma dell'accordo franco-jugoslavo mi troverei costretto procedere ad un esame delle ripercussioni che tale accordo potrà avere sulla situazione dell'Italia rispetto agli altri stati d'Europa legati dal patto di Locarno e riservarmi quindi ogni definitiva decisione anche nei riguardi del carattere da dare ai rapporti italo-jugoslavi dopo un tale patto" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 271, p. 196).

This clarification does not aim at finding the origins of these difficult relations, but aims instead at pointing at the interconnectedness of the relations between Rome, Paris and Belgrade, and also at the common interests that counterposed Italy and France.

Therefore, this perspective while considering the existence of contrasting interests between Rome and Paris, understands Mussolini's continental revisionism as implemented in an anti-French perspective.

Before moving to the next section, it is important to recall that the interpretative perspectives here reported are not antithetical to one another, and also that in reporting them there is no intention to disqualify any of them. These perspectives are indeed compatible to one another and it is also possible to assert that each of them underlines one of the multifaceted elements that did constitute the Italian international interactions and its behavioural standing in the international arena. However, since the intent of this research is to focus on investigating the existence of a common point between the Italian assertive international standing and the process of status seeking that Italy pursued in order to have its prestige recognized, this section will focus on a closer investigation of this last option that takes into consideration a wider framework in which Italo-French relations are included.

This focus on the relations between Italy and France is motivated by of two reasons. First, this anti-French perspective allows to read the Italian assertive behaviours addressed at Belgrade *in primis*, and towards the Balkan area more in general, as an example of the *relational aggressiveness* that was advanced in chapter 3 – when dealing with the different types of aggressiveness. Indeed, as mentioned above, whether the adoption of an aggressive rhetoric can be assimilated to the *verbal* type of aggressiveness, this Italian challenging the Balkan French network, via Belgrade in

primis, is comparable to the concept of indirect/relational aggression with which Italy aims at tackling French interests and relations in the area¹⁸⁸.

Secondly, the research will focus on understanding the interconnections between Italian-French relations because by looking at diplomatic documentations it emerges the idea that not only Italy implemented the continental revisionism in an anti-French perspective, but also that this assertive standing towards France was in itself aiming at obtaining that France granted Rome with the recognition of the Italian great power status.

Therefore, the Italian-French relations constitutes a good angle from which to look at the status seeking process that Italy implemented in order to seek for its recognition.

To furtherly develop this this perspective, it is possible to identify three different variants in this anti-French Italian behaviour. Certainly, these variations are more distinguishable in theory than in practice, yet pointing them out helps to understand some implicit but important variations.

In the first variation, the Italian behaviour in the Balkans is somehow *reactive* to French behaviours. This first variant identifies that one of the reasons behind Italian assertive behaviours in the Balkan area rises from the Italian desire to payback France by contrasting its extension and influence in the Danube-Balkan area in the same way Paris had contrasted Italy's extension on the Mediterranean Sea and in Africa (Milza, 2000, 469-470).

Another variant sees this Italian expansion in the Balkan as an attempt to find its own space: once Italy didn't have the colonial compensations it looked for, it turned to the Balkans looking for a different area of influence. In other words, having failed in the aspiration for colonial compensations, Mussolini opted for the *continental revisionism*, thus avoiding to directly clash with Paris over the Mediterranean Sea and the African area (Milza, 2000, 471).

The last variant of this anti-French perspective finds some elements of *functionality* in this Italian projection of interests in the Danube-Balkan area.

¹⁸⁸ Child developmental psychology defines indirect/relational aggressiveness those behaviours "that are more covert and are usually aimed at harming another person's social status, friendships, or reputation (e.g. Crick, 1996). Some behaviors classified as indirect or relational include malicious gossip, exclusion from activities and groups, and giving someone 'the silent treatment' [ignoring]" (Cillessen, Mayeux, 2007, 146).

This idea that the Italian interests in the Balkans are anti-French in a functional way, emerges both from historical studies and also from the historical documentation.

Ruggero Moscati (1963b) identifies a certain synchrony between the progress in the Italian continental revisionism and the Italo-French negotiations for the general amity agreement that was discussed between the two countries. To briefly state it: when the Italo-Albanian treaty was followed by the French-Yugoslav agreements, at the end of 1927, Italy protested the Paris' behaviour. This, and the already difficult relations between the two countries, induced exponents of the French right to question the French government about its approach with Italy, and also to stand in favour of more friendly relations with Rome. Briand, replying to these pressures, declared his availability and willingness to concretely pursue more friendly relations with Italy, and opened to the possibility of negotiations for a general agreement between the two (Moscati, 1963, 111-112). Therefore, Mussolini, after the first steps of more friendly relations with France, slows down its projection into the Balkans, and resumes it when it is clear that negotiations are not giving results, in spring 1928 (Moscati, 1963, 111-112). Indeed, in May 1928 Italy signed an agreement with Turkey, on the 5th of June Mussolini held the Senate speech on foreign policy in which declared that Italy was a revisionist country and in September 1928 another agreement was signed with Greece, thus extending the Italian penetration in the area (Moscati, 1963, 112-113).

The main idea upon which this last perspective builds is that, Italy used its extension on the Balkans as a leverage on Paris. Therefore, this perspective proves fundamental in advancing the question upon which this research builds: what was Italy seeking from France?

As mentioned above, diplomatic documentations suggest that Italy was seeking for the recognition of its status. Therefore, repeating it again, the Italian-French relations constitutes a good angle from which to look at the status seeking process that Italy implemented in order to seek for its recognition.

(III) – Understanding Italian status seeking behavioural strategy in light of the Italian–French relations: the negotiations for the Italian participation to the Tangier issue

When looking at the French–Italian relations, it is usual to underline the role played by the material contrasting interest that contraposed the two countries. It is

indeed typical to report, as an example, that Italy and France had different points of competition, among which the issues of Tunis, Tangier and the colonial compensations (Moscati, 1963b, 105).

The prevalence of this perspective is understandable since it was fostered, *in primis*, by the official declarations made at that time by the Italian government. Indeed, in the declarations made ahead of the negotiations for the Italian-French general agreement, the Italian government itself had focussed the attention on the list of the pending, competing, issues that were dividing the two countries. And this list has usually referred at very concrete issues.

To report some examples, ahead of the beginning of the Italo-French negotiations, Virgilio Gayda – a filo-government Italian journalist – articulated and publicized an article that well-listed all the issues pending between Italy and France. This list, basically and implicitly, turned around the issue of the colonial mandates, and built on the Italian request for the revision of the treaties (Moscati, 1963, 112).

The close sympathy between the journalist and the Mussolinian government is proven by the fact that similar contents result from the Italian diplomatic documents. Indeed, numerous are the telegrams from 1926 in which Mussolini insists (usually with the Italian ambassadors to Paris), on the fact that any agreement between Rome and Paris should be preceded by resolutions of the pending issues between the two countries.

On the 20th of April, 1926, Mussolini writes,

"concernente i rapporti franco-italiani (...) [n]on è dubbio che esiste possibilità accordo e intesa molto stretta e concreta purché sia preceduta dalla favorevole soluzione delle questioni cui V. E. [Avezana] accenna e cioè Tunisi, Tangeri, Abissinia, mandati coloniali, fuoriusciti, trattato commercio" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 303; p. 219; see also DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 505; p. 395).

One year after, on the 14th of April 1927, Mussolini writes to the new Italian Ambassador to Paris, Manzoni,

"Per conto mio non vedo pertanto altra possibilità di giungere ad un risultato soddisfacente se non prendendo in considerazione contemporaneamente alle proposte di un patto di amicizia, la questione di Tunisi in relazione anche alla posizione mediterranea dell'Italia e quella dei fuoriusciti" (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 137; p. 145).

In November, 1927, the tension between Italy and France was revived by the signatures of the French-Yugoslavian treaty, and of the Italo-Albanian treaty. As mentioned above this induced both governments to reopen to the possibilities of an Italo-French agreement. Ahead of this, on December 4th, 1927, Mussolini takes some personal notes concerning what he defines as the *indispensable conditions for an improvement of Italian-French relations*. The note is very brief and lists these conditions,

- "1) Accoglimento benevolo delle richieste italiane per Tangeri,
- 2) Rinnovo per 20 anni delle Convenzioni Tunisine del 1896,
- 3) Confini meridionali ed occidentali della Tripolitani,
- 4) Mano libera nei Balcani e nel Mediterraneo Orientale in modo che la espansione politica, economica italiana non trovi impacci diretti o indiretti francesi,
- 5) Questione snazionalizzazione.
- 6) Questione diritto di asilo,
- 7) Revisione 'Mandati'" (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 653 p. 601).

The indispensability of these conditions is reiterated in dialogues between Rome and Paris in January 1928, and Mussolini insists on defining these issues as 'minor' issues to be resolved before further talking for an agreement¹⁸⁹ (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 68 p. 68).

In March, 1928, there are good signals of a positive resolution for the Tangier issue, and on the 13th of April, Mussolini writes to Manzoni, concerning the remaining issues pending between the two governments,

"Scartata la questione di Tangeri (...) [il contenuto del negoziato italo-francese] si riduce ora essenzialmente a quattro punti: 1) Rinnovo delle convenzioni del '96 circa Tunisi per un periodo corrispondente a quello che verrà fissato per la prima scadenza del patto di amicizia italo-francese, cioè presumibilmente cinque anni. 2) Delimitazione dei confini meridionali ed occidentali della Libia. 3) Assicurazione francese per il riconoscimento delle priorità italiane nel caso di revisione dei mandati. 4) Patto di amicizia italo-francese" DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 248 p. 213).

These issues are still presented as minimum requirement for further negotiations.

These messages help to illustrate that since 1926 until 1928 Mussolini keeps on constantly reminding the existence of pending issues between Rome and Paris, and on

¹⁸⁹ In March 1928, a few days after Italy was invited to participate to the Conference for Tangier – in its own terms – France, on the 19th of March, will propose to deal separately with the pending issues on the one side and the negotiations for a general agreement on the other (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 167 p. 146).

underlying the importance of these issues to the Italian government and the *indispensability* of their resolution.

The emphasis put on this list of *indispensable minimum conditions*, gives the impression that the Italian ambitions turned around very practical and material issues: mandates and colonial compensations, redefinition of borders, etc.

Yet, by furtherly looking at internal diplomatic documents, some contradictions emerge with regard to this Italian orientation to material-issues and compensations. It is indeed interesting to report that in an internal document¹⁹⁰ of June 1927, reporting on the Italian situation with regard to mandates, it is clearly asserted that, notwithstanding the Italy ambition and the Italian right to be conferred with colonial mandates, the Italian government (under the suggestion of Scialoja) had a clear clue of the fact that mandates were expensive and that Italy couldn't afford to manage them under the economic aspect. The report also states that the Italian approach to the issue is to continue claiming the Italian right for colonies, this while hoping that Italy will not be assigned with any colony soon.

"Per quanto riguarda la eventuale concessione di un mandato coloniale all'Italia viene riconosciuta innanzitutto la necessità di continuare a mantenerci fermi in linea di principio sul nostro diritto ad avere un mandato. (...). S. E. Scialoja fa presenti le inevitabili e ingenti spese a cui si andrebbe incontro, una volta ottenuto un mandato; perciò, mentre da un lato dobbiamo continuare ad insistere sul nostro diritto in general, sarebbe preferibile che la questione non venisse sul tappeto troppo presto" (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 275; p. 272).

The realistic evaluation and the consciousness of the fact that Italy was not momentarily able to manage colonies, and its strong insistence, anyway, on its colonial rights, suggests that colonial mandates had for Italy a further – *intrinsic* – value that overcome the material one.

Indeed, what emerges from the internal memorandum of June 1927 is that Italy, by insisting in pursuing its right to be assigned with colonies, was already pursuing

¹⁹⁰ This document is reported in the collection of Italian diplomatic documents with the title "Promemoria". The document is specified to be anonymous and with no date, and it was recognized as pertaining to Dino Grandi, and dated on the 13th of June, 1927. See, DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 275; p. 272.

something in itself – this insistence on the Italian colonial rights, was an aim in itself.¹⁹¹

This suggests and implies the need to investigate on this *implicit value*.

A closer look at diplomatic documents and messages that Mussolini exchanged with Italian representatives suggest two important conclusions.

First, that the implicit aim behind the Italian insistence on the pending issues between Rome and Paris was related to the recognition and conferral of Italian great power status. In other words, Italy wanted Paris to concede her with these practical/material issues because they represented an implicit recognition of the Italian prestige, or also, Italy insisted on its rights to be conceded with these requests because the insistence in itself was part of the status seeking strategy.

Italy pursued the recognition of its great power status, by pursuing more concrete issues that had a symbolic and intrinsic value to its social status, and by insisting on these issues.

The second finding concerns the process with which the Italian government was pursuing its status seeking recognition. Indeed, documents show that Italy was seeking for its great power status by consciously and functionally adopting an assertive international standing that was adopted in function to this strategy of insistence.

¹⁹¹ With regard to this, building on Stefanachi (2015), it is possible to report that in the traditional IR approaches, the role of *prestige* is restricted to a functional–material perspective. Simplifying the concept, it is possible to state that in this traditional approach, a state pursues *prestige* in order to gain more power. By departing from the Waltzian interpretation of Rousseau, and by returning instead to the 'original' Rousseau, the author advances the need for International Relations to reconsider the role of *prestige* without restricting it to a functional–material perspective. The idea that is advanced by the author is that seeking for *prestige* means more than aiming to gain reputation in order to gain further power (Stefanachi, 2015). Instead, by building on the sociological Rousseau, it results that aiming at *prestige* can be an aim in itself. This implies an overturning of the traditional relation between material power and prestige. Directly quoting the author, "[Q]uella teoria ricettiva della lezione rousseauiana si chiederebbe se il prestigio non sia a volte *la verità del desiderio stesso di potenza* – se la potenza non venga accumulata per il prestigio che promette di assegnare (rispetto, timorosa ammirazione) piuttosto che il contrario (il prestigio ricercato per il potere-influenza che promette di assicurare)" (Stefanachi, 2015, 34).

Therefore, the Rousseauvian perspective advances that its material ambitions are pursued in function of the symbolic significance they carry, which in turn contribute to the pursue of prestige. Directly quoting the author, "Una teoria sensibile alla lezione rousseauiana proverebbe a [mettere] a fuoco le dinamiche emulative e mimetiche dell'amor proprio – si terrebbe pronta a cercare nella richiesta di riconoscimento e prestigio 'la verità di altri desideri', per dirla con T. Todorov interprete di Rousseau,^[191] ovvero la verità della ricerca di beni magari trascurabili sul piano della cura di sé (sicurezza) ma investiti di valenza simbolica dai membri della società internazionale (una colonia d'oltremare in un teatro periferico può divenire il simbolo di un 'posto al sole', senza scartare l'ipotesi che anche i beni militari o economici normalmente associati a una spassionata, utilitaristica politica di potenza/sicurezza (una flotta d'oltre mare o la tecnologia nucleare) possono assumere un significato ulteriore e simbolico (emblemi di maturità, o 'civiltà' degli attori), e come tali inseguiti fino a mettere in pericolo la stessa sicurezza nazionale (ieri appunto della Germania guglielmina, oggi magari dell'Iran)" (Stefanachi, 2015, 34).

It is possible to retrace these two elements by looking at the documents concerning the negotiations for the Tangier statute.

As mentioned above, the Tangier issue was listed among the pending issues between Italy and France. It is indeed since the beginning of 1920s that Italy asked to be included in the talking-negotiations for the revision of the statute of Tangier. In October 1923, with an official note directed at Great Britain, France and Spain, Mussolini formally asked to be admitted to these negotiations. This request was, however, turned down on the basis of the fact the Italy had no legal rights to participate to negotiations, this because, the other agreements concerning Tangier have also been concluded among the other three nations, without a direct Italian participation. Italy, in 1906, did participated to the Algeciras Conference, but with the role of signatory, as all the other European powers, along with the United States and Morocco.

Therefore, the Italian request was not legally supported. Yet, the Italian stance on her decision was very persistent, to the point that Italy connect the resolution of this issue – together with the other above-mentioned pending issues – to the possibility of further negotiations and agreements with Paris.

The internal messages that Mussolini exchanged with his collaborators are useful to shed light upon the importance associated to this issue, its intrinsic value and also the way in which Italy pursues these aims.

Going by order, on the 28th of August 1926, Mussolini sends a telegram addressed to Romano Avezana, in Paris¹⁹². In his message Mussolini underlines his disapproval of the French intention to negotiate exclusively with Spain as a first step, and to share the conclusions with Italy and Great Britain only afterwards. The reasons for this opposition are related to the difficulties that Italy will encounter in order to advance any modification to their first conclusions.

Next to this Mussolini expresses another fundamental reason: Italy is mostly interested in establishing the principle of its rights to intervene on each Mediterranean issue. In his own words,

¹⁹² The telegram was also sent to the Italian Embassies in London, Madrid and Tangier.

"a V.E. [Avezzana] è noto che quanto maggiormente ci interessa è di far accettare e stabilire chiaramente che l'Italia deve essere chiamata a decidere su tutte le questioni mediterranee, e che a questo titolo deve intervenire nella questione di Tangeri, anche indipendentemente dalla sua qualità di firmataria dell'atto di Algesiras" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 399 p. 308).

Mussolini, then continues by reminding to Avezzana that Italy is supporting the Spanish position on the issues, this precisely in order to be able to establish this principle,

"questa è stata una delle principali ragioni che ci hanno persuasi a considerare benevolmente le domande spagnole perché esse potrebbero darci modo di far sancire questo principio, e di riaprire in certo senso la questione marocchina cercando di far valere alcuni nostri interessi anche al di fuori di Tangeri" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 399 p. 308).

Mussolini invites Avezzana to, politely, communicate to Paris the Italian interests and intentions on the issue,

"se il governo francese si ostinerà in tale atteggiamento, esso si urterà molto probabilmente nelle stesse difficoltà che ha sollevato la mancata nostra adesione allo statuto [del 1923], e che non sarebbero ora sorte (né si sarebbe data occasione alle attuali domande spagnole) se la Francia avesse accettato la partecipazione dell'Italia alla conferenza suddetta [del 1923]. Rilevo con rincrescimento che [la Francia non ha] ancora compreso che l'Italia non rinuncerà mai a fare energicamente ed assiduamente valere i diritti che le conferisce la sua qualità di grande potenza mediterranea, e di cui dopo la guerra ha acquisito una sicura e perfetta coscienza" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 399 p. 308).

In this message Mussolini continuously insists on the Italian role as a great power, and on the need for the Italian government to establish its prestigious role.

In the message, Mussolini makes also reference to the contextualization of this Italian verbal aggressiveness, if France positively responds to the Italian requests, Italy will well behave, on the opposite problems may arise if France persists misrecognizing the Italian great power status requests.

*l'Italia nell'esame di questi problemi porterà una serena comprensione degli interessi altrui e non soltanto una egoistica e ristretta visione dei propri e che in tali condizioni la Francia non ha nulla da temere per effetto della partecipazione dell'Italia, ma piuttosto della sua esclusione ove persistesse a ripetere l'errore del 1923" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 399 p. 308).

Always with regard to the methods implemented in this status seeking strategy, it is possible to mention that on the 1st of September 1926, Mussolini writes to Avezzana

confirming his support to Avezzana's suggestion to momentarily suspend Italian insistence on the Tunisi issue explaining that, "Credo anch'io che non convenga per il momento insistere sulle questioni di Tunisi. Non bisogna avere aria di mendicare concessioni mediocri" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 402 p. 310).

This telegram shows that the Italian aims were subordinated to the appropriateness of the context in which were advanced.

On the same day, Mussolini also addresses the Italian Ambassadors in London, Paris and Madrid and diplomatic officer in Tangier, expressing his opinion with regard to the possibility that Italy participates to negotiating-conversations that should involve the four involved countries. Mussolini confirms that he is in favour of this proposal, but specifically insists that these negotiations have to be *common* and not *parallel*, otherwise it would still imply the Italian exclusion.

Mussolini wanted indeed to participate to the negotiations on the statute of Tangier with a role equal to the other three powers.

He then invites his ambassadors to insist on the host governments with the following words – again insisting on the Italian rights,

"Raccomando a V. E. di insistere energicamente presso Briand dimostrandogli tutti gli inconvenienti che deriverebbero per la Francia dalla ripetizione dell'errore del 1923 e soprattutto facendogli rilevare la grave ripercussione che si verificherebbe nell'opinione pubblica italiana qualora risultasse chiaro che la Francia ancora una volta si rifiuta per le meschine vedute dei suoi governanti, di dare all'Italia una soddisfazione che le è assolutamente dovuta per la sua situazione mediterranea di diritto e di fatto" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 403 p. 310).

In the following months, while tension between Italy and France continues also because of issues related to the Italian anti-fascist exponents that lived in France, Mussolini turned to Spain in order to implement the Italian strategy on the issue. The idea was to support an initiative that would confer the management of Tangier to the Spanish government – instead of leaving it to France, or turning it into an international common management¹⁹³.

¹⁹³ Italy preferred to favour the Spanish management in order not to give room to a further French extension in the Mediterranean area.

The strategy provided that Italy would support Spain in exchange for the Spanish support on the Italian request to have *common* negotiating-conversations in which Italy had to participate with an equal role with France, Spain and Great Britain.

On the 15th of September, 1926, Mussolini addresses the Spanish government insisting on the extreme importance that this issue had for Italy (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 421 p. 325).

It is interesting to report that this Italian insistence on the important value that Italy associated to this issue, was confirmed by Chamberlain himself. Indeed, in the private (non-official) meeting, of the 30th of September, that he had with Mussolini while in Livorno, when talking about issues concerning Morocco-Tangier, is Chamberlain himself to express to Mussolini that, in support of his requests, London suggest to opt for a solution in which Spain and France have a first round of negotiating-conversations, and that after they have reached a draft of agreement, the negotiations are opened to Italy and Great Britain, thus resulting in a Conference for Tangier where all four countries are invited to participate and negotiate.

Chamberlain takes this opportunity to clearly mention to Mussolini that "L'interesse morale e di prestigio dell'Italia è evidente ed è perfettamente riconosciuto dal Foreign Office"¹⁹⁴ (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 444 p. 342).

With this declaration, Chamberlain is pointing at the heart of the matter. Indeed, it is Mussolini himself who explicitly addresses this precise point in a telegram he sent to Avezzana and Della Torretta, on the 24th of October, 1926. Mussolini is addressing the possibilities that Italy may join the prospective conference on Tangier thanks to its being among the states signatory to the 1906 Algeciras Conference.

Mussolini opposes the idea to reunite the states signatory to the Algeciras Conference, because this runs contrary to the Italian intentions. Mussolini writes,

"[C]hiarire a Chamberlain che ragioni per cui sono poco favorevole riunione conferenza di tutti gli stati firmatari dell'atto di Algesiras sono essenzialmente determinate dalla tesi che il R. Governo ha sempre sostenuto e continuerà a sostenere malgrado che in buona o mala fede si persista purtroppo a non comprenderla" (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 470 p. 362).

¹⁹⁴ The content of the meeting and of the exchanges between Mussolini and Chamberlain are reported by Mussolini in an extensive note about the meeting. See, DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 442-444 p. 341-342)

The reason, he explains, relates to the fact that being Italy a state with direct interests and influence on the Mediterranean area, it cannot be listed among a large number of states signatory¹⁹⁵ that have no direct interests in the area. Italy is a Mediterranean great power, and it is its right and duty to be involved in all the issues relating to the Mediterranean area., as a Mediterranean power – and not as a simple signatory of the Algeciras Conference. Mussolini indeed writes that,

"L'Italia ritiene di avere diritto a partecipare ad ogni decisione circa Tangeri non soltanto come firmataria dell'atto di Algesiras, ma come grande potenza mediterranea alla stessa stregua della Francia, dell'Inghilterra e della Spagna, giacché la questione di Tangeri è una questione mediterranea che deve essere in primo luogo decisa dalle grandi potenze mediterranee"¹⁹⁶ (DDI, serie VII, vol. IV, n. 470 p. 362).

Therefore, the insists on obtaining the recognition of its equal role in the area and in order to achieve this end Italy focussed on its strategy that turned around an agreement with Spain. Italy supports the Spain's rights of management of Tangier, and Spain has to support the Italian right to enter into negotiations on an equal level with France, Spain and Great Britain¹⁹⁷ (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 320 p. 310).

To contextualize these events, it is possible to report that, in the meanwhile, Italy has signed the first agreement with Albania at the end of 1926, and in the first months of 1927 has kept on developing its relations with the Balkan area, and also the negotiating-conversations concerning an eventual agreement with France (see, for example, DDI, serie VII, vol. V, nn. 3; 5; 19; 23; 24; 29; 50; 137).

¹⁹⁵ The states signatory to the Algeciras Conference include the US and a large number of European countries.

¹⁹⁶ This same orientation results from an anonymous internal memorandum that historians have traced back to May 1927. The document is supposed to have been written by the Italian governmental Office of Europe and Levant – also identified as Office V. The document reports considerations upon the behaviour that Italy should maintain with regard to the Tangier issue¹⁹⁶ (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 230 p. 232).

¹⁹⁷ This request is reiterated to Spain on the 11th of July, 1927, when it seems that Spain, in its first round of negotiations with Paris, is not probably going to stand for the Italian requests. Mussolini telegrammed Medici, the Italian ambassador to Madrid, to invite him to protest to the Spanish representatives about this possibility. Mussolini reminds to Madrid that the Italian support is subordinated to the fact that Italy has to be clearly invited to negotiations in its role of Mediterranean great power. "[È] indispensabile che il governo di Madrid si renda chiaramente conto come il nostro appoggio debba essere in tutto subordinato: 1) all'adesione esplicita che l'Italia deve essere ufficialmente chiamata a dare ad eventuali accordi franco spagnoli, non semplicemente come Potenza firmataria dell'Atto di Algesiras, ma come Grande Potenza Mediterranea, interessata alla soluzione della questione di Tangeri sullo stesso piede della Francis, dell'Inghilterra e della Spagna" (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 320 p. 310).

The Italian international standing – in the Tangier issue, but also in other pending issue with France – has been characterized by a particular behavioural attitude, which can be retraced through some internal documents.

In line with this, it is interesting to report that in the above-mentioned internal memorandum of June 1927, which focussed on the status of the Italian colonial mandates¹⁹⁸, reports that according to Grandi, Italy should in the Commission of Mandates, continue to adopt the strategy of 'repeatedly bothering the mandatory powers' – "Grandi ritiene utile che venga continuata la tattica di 'dar noia continuamente' alle potenze mandatarie" (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 275 p. 272).

Moreover, with regard to the tactics that the Italian government and representatives have implemented in order to achieve success in the Tangier issue, on August 23rd, 1927, Grandi writes to Bastianini, the Italian diplomatic officer in Tangier, that it is a priority for Italy to protest, each and every time, against the applications of the statute of Tangier that don't respect its Italian interpretation. Grandi notes that, though protesting may not have immediate effects, still it is fundamental for Italy to keep in reaffirms its rights and to avoid any acquiescent stance on violations.

"Non ci si può illudere che le nostre proteste e le nostre opposizioni a riserve abbiano sempre e immediatamente degli effetti pratici favorevoli ma è indispensabile affermare in ogni possibile occasione il nostro buon diritto ed evitare di far risultare in apparenza od in sostanza una qualsiasi acquiescenza da parte nostra alle violazioni di esso" (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 275 p. 272).

On the 17th of September, 1927, is Mussolini to express upon the approach that Italy should adopt against the French denationalisation of Italian citizens living in Tunisia. He writes – to Manzoni, the Italian ambassador to Paris – that,

"Occorre invece cercare di dare continuamente alla Francia la chiara impressione della sensibilità italiana di fronte ad ogni questione che tocca la Tunisia in modo che essa se vuol proseguire in un programma che poi non ha obbiettivi vitali da raggiungere debba rendersi conto di tutta la gravità del problema e delle ripercussioni sulle relazioni italo-francesi" (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 472 p. 412).

Once more, Mussolini underlines the importance of insisting on the issues. Moreover, he continues but stating that, contrary to what Briand suggests – to not involve the

¹⁹⁸ The memorandum was mentioned above, and is reported as an anonymous document which has been identified as presumably written by Dino Grandi. See, DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 275 p. 272).

public opinions – Mussolini instead insists on the importance to use this tool in order pressure on France.

"La tesi prospettata a V. E. [Manzoni] dal signor Briand di condurre le questioni tunisine in modo da non esacerbare il sentimento delle due opinioni pubbliche non è esatta, poiché i provvedimenti che in Tunisia la Francia va prendendo, essendo a solo nostro danno, la reazione dell'opinione pubblica può essere soltanto italiana e può e deve servire come ammonimento al governo francese. D'altra parte poiché è necessario che una intesa sulla questione tunisina sia pregiudiziale ad ogni nostra eventuale intesa generale con la Francia, mi sembra chiara la convenienza che la questione stessa sia tenuta il più possibile viva" (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 472 p. 412).

In October 1927, Mussolini reporting on the main aspects of the Italian politics in the Tangier issue, writes the it is in the Italian interest to leave the Tangier issue open as long as possible (see, DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 465 p. 454).

Therefore, these documents show that Italy was instrumentally using an assertive behaviour, which also took advantage of the role of the Italian public opinion¹⁹⁹.

Again, contextualizing the events, autumn and winter are marked by the international turbulence that followed the French-Yugoslavian and Italo-Albanian treaties. On December 4th, Mussolini writes down the abovementioned list of *minimum indispensable conditions* to improve Italo-French relations (see, DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 653 p. 601).

On the 8th of December, Scialoja (the Italian Officer at the League of Nations) reports to Mussolini about his meeting with Briand, informing about the positive impressions that Briand gave him about the French desire to improve relations with Italy (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 6539 p. 603).

Mussolini's reply, on the 8th of December, shows the Italian resolute aim to have more concrete signals on the French side in order to be able to make progresses on their relations (DDI, serie VII, vol. V, n. 662 p. 605).

In the beginning of 1928 there are still some debates with Spain concerning the opportunity that Spain may not insist on supporting the Italian requests. Also in this

¹⁹⁹ This contributes to frame the debate on the prevalence of domestic policy upon the international one into an overturned perspective.

case, Mussolini strongly intervenes with messages of protest to the Spanish government (see, DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 94 p. 87).

The Tangier issue finds its first positive resolution for Italy in March, 1928. Italy has finally been invited to participate to the second round of negotiating-conversations on Tangier, together with Great Britain, but most of all, under equal terms. The invitation indeed prescribed the possibility for both countries to participate to the extended conference together with France and Spain, where they all would have been able to deliberate on the Franco-Spanish decisions and to express their conditions upon their participation to the Tangier's statute (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 151 p. 132).

On the 9th of March, Mussolini replies to this invitation addressing Manzoni, the Italian Ambassador in Paris.

This is definitely the most important document to this research since it gives a clear internal perspective on the Italian intentions and on the methods with which Italy pursued its ambitions.

Mussolini writes indeed that, it was thanks to *the Italian attitude* in the entire situation that Italy has, finally, been invited to participate, on equal terms.

"Tale invito significa che grazie al fermo contegno mantenuto dall'Italia è stato riconosciuto il nostro buon diritto di aver veste e voce nel regolamento di una questione così interessante l'equilibrio mediterraneo, e quindi tale che nonostante i miopi cavilli precedentemente addotti l'Italia non poteva esserne esclusa" (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 151 p. 132).

A few lines below, he more specifically defines this Italian attitude as *obstructionist*. Mussolini indeed, informs Manzoni that in the upcoming negotiations, though Italy has no great possibilities to continue with the *obstructionist attitude* adopted until now, still has no interest in abandoning its legitimate requests.

"V. E. terrà infine presente che in tali conversazioni R. Governo pur non avendo allo stato attuale delle cose possibilità né convenienza politica generale di continuare nel contegno ostruzionistico finora mantenuto non ha in realtà alcun interesse a raggiungere a tutti i costi un accordo e tanto meno ad ottenerlo col sacrificio delle nostre legittime richieste" (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 151 p. 132).

Indeed, this *obstructionist attitude* was adopted even during the negotiations of the extended Conference on Tangier.

In conclusion, the obstructionist attitude provided Italy with the confirmation of its Mediterranean role. The most interesting passage of this document follows when Mussolini asks Manzoni to find a proper occasion to furtherly stress to the French government that the Italian government has formally taken note of the fact that, the Italian right to deliberate on the Mediterranean issues, was finally recognized²⁰⁰.

"Mi sembra opportuni che, malgrado la soddisfazione praticamente da noi ottenuta, V. E. Manzoni] trovi modo ed occasione di far rilevare nelle riunioni che il R. Governo ha preso formalmente atto del riconoscimento del diritto dell'Italia di deliberare circa ogni questione relativa al Mediterraneo, nella sua qualità di grande potenza mediterranea" (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 151 p. 132).

These passages clearly establish a conscious association between the Italian status seeking intentions and the assertive behaviours that have been implemented functionally to this aim.

The Italian intransigence, or its obstructionist attitude, continues also during the conference on Tangier. Indeed, on March 27th, 1928, Mussolini provides Manzoni with further instructions on the attitude that Manzoni and the Italian staff will have to adopt in the extended Conference on Tangier.

In this telegram Mussolini insists on the fact that Italy aims at an Italian participation to the management of Tangier equal if not proportional to the other three powers (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 190 p. 166).

The next day, in another telegram – addressing the Italian representatives to London, Paris and Tangier – concerning the Italian request to be assigned with an equal part in the participation to the surveillance on the smuggling of weapons in Tangier²⁰¹, Mussolini invited the Italian representatives to assert that²⁰² this specific Italian request was important because Italy was pursuing in this request a *political*, not a technical, significance²⁰³ (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 192 p. 167).

²⁰⁰ Mussolini also informed Manzoni that he has already written to Paris and Madrid to accept the invitation.

²⁰¹ This Italian request had difficulties to be accepted (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 192 p. 167).

²⁰² When talking to the Spanish government, whose support Italy was trying to obtain.

²⁰³ "[L]a richiesta ha valore politico e non tecnico" (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 192 p. 167).

The negotiations in the extended conference on Tangier continue while Italy continues its negotiations for an agreement with Turkey and Greece, which, on the 30th of March, 1928, are also fastened in exact correspondence with the oppositions that the Italian requests met at the Conference on Tangier²⁰⁴ (see, DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 206 p. 175).

Italy also continued its relations with Yugoslavia – Italy opened to the possibility to grant the Belgrade government with more time to ratify the Treaty of Neptune.

The negotiations in the Conference for Tangier are going well and in July 1928, will arrive at a positive conclusion for Italy – on the 25th of July Mussolini receives the confirmation of the signature of the agreements, and of Briand's satisfaction for the positive conclusion (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 516 p. 452).

Yet, before the official conclusion on the 5th of June 1928, Mussolini held the famous Senate speech on the Italian foreign policy.

This speech is usually seen as the definitive and official affirmation of Italian revisionism. Mussolini indeed confirms his adherence to the idea that no treaty, for how inviolable may be, still they are not immutable (Susmel, 1958, 176-177). He also insists with verbal aggressiveness by claiming that,

"Complicazioni gravi saranno evitate se rivedendo i trattati di pace laddove meritano di essere riveduti, si darà nuovo e più ampio respiro alla pace. Questa è l'ipotesi che io accarezzo e alla quale è ispirata la politica veramente, sanamente, schiettamente pacifica del governo fascista e del popolo italiano" (Mussolini's Senate speech of June 1928; quoted in Moscati, 1963, 113).

Some considerations can be advanced with regard to the content of this speech. The speech begins with a list of all the results achieved by the fascist foreign policy, and a long report of the Italian relations with the other global nations, mentioned one by one.

When talking about the Italian relations with France, Mussolini states that relations are gradually improving and that he is optimist about future relations. He then takes this opportunity to also, and very extensively, mention the positive and successful negotiations of the conference on Tangier. Mussolini declares to be positive about their

²⁰⁴ On the 30th of March, Mussolini writes to the Italian, Deputy Secretary-General of the Society of the Nations, Paulicci De' Calboli Barone, inviting him to speed up the negotiations for the agreements with Greece and Turkey (DDI, serie VII, vol. VI, n. 206 p. 175).

upcoming conclusion and publicly mentions the meaning that this conference had for Italy. The content is perfectly in line with the document here analyzed. Mussolini indeed says, that "l'Italia come grande potenza mediterranea, riteneva di aver diritto d'intervenire al regolamento di ogni questione mediterranea" (Susmel, 1958, 168).

Again, Mussolini clearly reports the significance this issue had to Italy: the recognition of its being a Mediterranean great power.

"L'accoglimento delle nostre richieste (...) costituisce l'esplicito riconoscimento che la qualità di grande potenza essenzialmente mediterranea conferisce all'Italia il diritto ad una speciale considerazione, tanto nei riguardi della sistemazione, dal punto di vista internazionale, della zona tangerina del Marocco, quanto nei riguardi dell'amministrazione della zona stessa" (Susmel, 1958, 168).

This again confirms the intrinsic intention behind Italian requests and behaviour. Therefore, for how revisionist the speech may have been, when looking at it on top of the conclusions emerging from the diplomatic document, it is still possible to see the limits of the Italian revisionism itself.

Italy is a revisionist country, and it is also adopting assertive behaviours ahead of the fulfilment of these aims, but yet, the Italian revisionism is always subordinated to the social international boundaries. In line with this, treaties are not immutable (therefore they can be changed), but still are inviolable, which implies that they have to be changed.

It could be possible to assert that Italian revisionism was *relational* (see chapter 1), since, though the verbal threatens, still it pursued its requests with the interaction of the social relational environment.

The next conclusive section will focus on a brief analysis of the Italian international approach during the last years of the periodization here considered, when Mussolini shared its leading role with Dino Grandi who was nominated FM in September 1929.

2.3.3 – Mussolini and Grandi: a combined revisionist duet

This last section will focus on analysing the Italian international standing (and its behavioural strategy) during the last years of 1920s.

In order to contextualize the events, it is possible to report that, according to Moscati (1963b), 1929 saw the enhancement of more global issues: the economic crisis, the necessity to deal with the disarmament and the reparation issues. In these years, Italy had to leave its nationalistic perspective and to deal with more global/international issues. It is indeed, under this perspective that Moscati supports that the goal assigned to Grandi, as the new foreign minister, was to grant Italy with an autonomous international standing (Moscati, 1963b, 113).

Indeed, 1929 was also the year in which Mussolini left his FM office in favour of Dino Grandi.

Historiography has looked at these years by trying to understand how did Mussolini and Grandi work together and how did they contribute to Italian foreign policy.

With regard to this, historical studies, assert that, it is now commonly understood that the Italian foreign policy objectives (for example, the abovementioned *autonomous international standing*) were pursued with both Grandi and Mussolini working in perfect combination (Moscati, 1963b, 114).

Indeed, usually, Grandi is represented as the pacifist half, and Mussolini as the spoilsport. This because Mussolini kept on giving aggressive-style speeches, while Grandi worked on formulating the Italian standing with a more politically correct language. As reported by Moscati,

"l'azione di Grandi si svolgeva con piena moderazione, con pacatezza e secondo l'usuale procedere diplomatico; quella di Mussolini si esplicava in discorsi, interviste e dichiarazioni roboanti secondo il tipo stile fascista" (Moscati, 1963b, 114).

Yet these two strands were clearly and consciously implemented towards the same objective.

""[M]a i due ruoli diversi, le due parti diverse appartengono visibilmente ad una stessa rappresentazione, ad uno stesso lavoro. Una sola politica, dunque, ed una sola volontà nell'azione diplomatica italiana: (Moscati, 1963b, 114).

Milza (2000) as well, underlines that, notwithstanding this apparent double nature of the Grandi and Mussolini's approaches, still they both acted *in concert with each other*

(Milza, 2000, 681) producing a functional duet – that aimed at the pursuing of Italian great power status.

Grandi was Foreign Minister from 1929 until 1932. During these years he dealt with the negotiations for the Conference of Disarmament²⁰⁵, and also with the negotiations for the war compensations²⁰⁶.

Grandi participated to these international negotiations and conferences by accurately reflecting the stance of the Italian government, but he did so by translating in more diplomatic terms what Mussolini said in more fascist tone (Moscati, 1963b, 115).

In this context, the issue that caught most of the Italian attention between 1929 and 1932 were the negotiations for disarmament.

Italy, perfectly in line with its great power status ambitions, already manifested in all the issues concerning the Mediterranean area (as emerged from the previous sections), approached the negotiations on naval disarmament by advancing one simple request,

"si scegliesse qualsiasi limitazione agli armamenti terrestri, purché l'Italia non fosse in tal campo seconda a nessuna delle altre potenze europee; si limitasse l'armamento navale a qualsiasi livello, purché all'Italia fosse consentito di avere una flotta non inferiore a quella della Francia" (Moscati, 1963b, 115).

Again, in another international occasion, Italy kept on asking the establishment of a principle of equality between Italy and France. This Italian request, with regard to naval armament, was actually advanced since the Washington Conference of 1922²⁰⁷.

The disarmament issue was then reopened between 1927 and 1928, when France and Great Britain pursued bilateral negotiations with regard to the subdivision of units for which tonnage was limited (Moscati, 1963b, 115).

In this new occasion, Italy tried to conclude a preliminary agreement with France in which equality between the two was established, but, notwithstanding the commitment of both Grandi and Mussolini, successful results were difficult to obtain.

Since this research is not interested in the effectiveness of the behavioural strategies, but instead is interested in understanding the processes and the pursued

²⁰⁵ The negotiations begun in 1928 and the conference took place in 1932.

²⁰⁶ Meant as '*riparazioni*'.

²⁰⁷ The conference had established, with regard to battleships, the equality between United States and Great Britain on the one side, and Italy and France on the other.

aims, what is most interesting here is to point out that, in this case too, it was extremely important to the Italian government to establish a principle of equality with France. This because, on the contrary, Italy would have been officially assigned with a role in the Mediterranean, secondary to France (and Great Britain).

Therefore, also in this case it was fundamental for Italy to insist on its rights, indeed, perfectly reflecting the Italian position and interests with regard to the Tangier issue, it was extremely important for Italy not to endorse, in the disarmament negotiations, similar conclusions that would have constituted a definitive breach in its status seeking ambitions – and in its great power status narrative (Moscati, 1963b, 115-116).

"L'accettazione di una condizione d'inferiorità [rispetto alla Francia] avrebbe (...) significato riconoscersi una funzione di secondi piano nel Mediterraneo, e di conseguenza rinunciare a quella politica di espansionismo che era stata perseguita negli anni precedenti" (Moscati, 1963b, 116).

In conclusion, once more it is possible to underline that, also when addressing the disarmament issue, Italy was pursuing its great power status.

Therefore, it is interesting for this research to understand *how* did Italy pursue the recognition of its status. With regard to this, it is possible to furtherly report on the *concerted duet* carried out by Mussolini and Grandi.

In January 1930, when in Geneva for a meeting of the Leagues on Nations, and also when in London for the first meetings of the Disarmament Conference, Grandi adopted, in both cases, reassuring declarations (Milza, 2000, 683).

In April, 1930, the Disarmament Conference closed with no agreement between Rome and Paris (Milza, 2000, 683).

While Grandi continued adopting its peaceful declarations, Mussolini kept on adopting a verbal aggressiveness. In May 1930, while in Florence, he made some declarations concerning the naval disarmament,

"Desidero affermare qui ora che il nostro programma sarà completato fino all'ultima tonnellata, e che ciascuna delle trentanove unità da battaglia sarà varata. La volontà del fascismo è una volontà ferrea. È matematica. (...) il popolo italiano, piuttosto che restare prigioniero del mare che una volta apparteneva a Roma, farà tutti i sacrifici possibili (...).

Le parole cono una bella cosa, ma fucili, cannoni, navi, aeroplani, sono anche più belli. All'alba di domani lo spettacolo delle nostre forze armate rivelerà al mondo il volto calmo e guerriero dell'Italia" (Mussolini, quoted in Milza, 2000, 683).

Milza himself underlines that, though these declarations²⁰⁸ do contradict with the language adopted by Grandi, still, "questa apparente discordanza non rispecchia al momento alcuna divergenza di fondo" (Milza, 2000, 683).

Milza continues reporting that,

"Nel 'duetto' che il Duce e il suo ministro eseguono, niente è veramente lasciato all'improvvisazione dell'uno e dell'altro. A Ginevra, Grandi si dedica con un certo successo a rassicurare la comunità internazionale circa le reali intenzioni dell'Italia. A Roma, il Duce mobilita l'opinione pubblica sul tema della nazione proletaria che non ha timore dei ricchi e che è pronta a venire alle mani con il mondo intero, qualora la sua 'indipendenza' e il suo 'avvenire' risultino minacciati" (Milza, 2000, 683).

It is also interesting to report that Milza insists on the fact that, with the exception of France – who had a competitive relation with Italy due to contrasting interests – "nessuno in Europa attribuisce un'importanza eccessiva alle sue minacce" (Milza, 2000, 683).

Once more, it is possible to identify in the Italian verbal aggressiveness an instrumental role that contributed to the Italian strategy for status seeking.

Similar to the insistence on reaffirming the Italian rights to colonial mandated – which Italy couldn't actually afford – also in this case Mussolini threatens by referring to the Italian willingness to show its real power and capacities.

And, even more interesting is to read about the existence of a common understanding of this strategy; not only the Italian government and its collaborators knew about it, but also the other countries – and Chamberlain, when in Livorno, confirmed it.

²⁰⁸ Milza advances that these declarations were mostly aimed at internal politics (Milza, 2000, 683).

3 – Conclusions

This thesis has moved from the conceptualization of the current IR conception of the recognition process that status seekers implement in order to obtain the recognition of their aimed status.

The aim was to confront this theoretical framework with the empirical observations of status seeking processes for recognition, this in order to address the mismatch that is possible to identify between the theoretical formulations on how the recognition process is accomplished and the empirical observations.

Indeed, according to the current IR theory, status seekers that aim to be granted with the recognition of their self-advanced status, are expected to perform exclusively complying behaviours. Behaving as conformingly as possible, performing the so-called 'good citizen' behaviours, responds to the relational aspects of social interaction and of the identity formation process.

The fundamental assumption at the basis of the current IR theory on recognition process is that, as for identity, also the recognition of status is relational since it takes place within a social interaction.

This all brings to the idea that states seeking for the recognition of their self-advanced status tend to perform socially compliant behaviours.

Yet, a problem occurs when the candidate (the status seeker) is not immediately conferred with its self-advanced identity.

The IR literature outlines, for these cases of misrecognition, a spectrum of behavioural options that are clear-cut and alternative. Reporting it in a few words, frustrated candidates can opt between further compliance (in order to socially and conformingly convince its audience), or can opt for a conflictual option which instead implies a direct challenge to the *misrecognizers* – in order to oblige them to concede the status's recognition or to punish them (see chapter 1).

In front of these alternative behavioural strategies, two are the main perspectives frustrated status seeker comply with the system or on the opposite challenge the system with conflictual behaviours.

The main problem relates precisely to this clear-cut and almost dichotomous perspective. Indeed, the problem is how to understand the foreign policies of those status seekers that perform deviant behaviours next to compliant ones.

Indeed, empirical observations of the international standing of status seekers instead of manifesting clear cut behavioural strategies, do manifest symptoms and signals of both behaviours. How to understand this compresence of behaviours?

The IR literature focussed on foreign policy analysis, offers two main options. Building on concepts outlines by Friedberg (see chapter 2) it is possible to report these two options in the following terms: the *optimistic* perspective expects frustrated status seekers to persist in their social compliance – this basically because of the assumption that status is relational and socially conferred – therefore this interpretative analysis focusses its mostly on the manifestations of complying behaviours, and justifies instead the presence of deviant/assertive behaviours observed in the foreign policy of status seekers. On the opposite, the *pessimistic* perspective gives more relevance to the manifestations of deviant and assertive behaviours, while downplaying the presence of complying behaviours, this because sees in these observations the symptoms of a conflictual approach on the side of the status seeker.

Moving from this and approaching this puzzle of compresence of behaviours, the intent of this thesis is to address this complex combination aiming at a comprehensive understanding of these manifestations.

Following in the steps of IR literature that has already borrowed from the sociological field, the thesis builds on the findings achieved by child developmental psychology at the end of 1990s. Chapter 3 deals with the reasons and advantages of this borrowing, and also extensively reports on the concepts and the developments that brought peer relation studies (in child developmental psychology) to revise their traditional conception of social interactions and behavioural strategies.

Briefly reporting it, since when child developmental psychology studies started building on the distinction between two different dimensions of status (*popularity* status and *likeability* status), new findings were reached by furtherly investigating this distinction. The main point turned around the fact that popularity and likeability are different types of statuses, with different characteristics: popularity relates to the status-rank, social standing of the individual among its peers, while likeability relates to social acceptance and the degrees of liking that an individual receives. Therefore, these dimensions measure two different types of status, which – peer relations scholars discover that – are related with different associations. Indeed, while likeability is associated with

prosocial characteristics, popularity results being associated with both prosocial and antisocial characteristics and behaviours.

This opened space for further investigations on the relation existing between popularity status and this compresence of opposed features that brought to the conclusions that, kids when seeking for popularity status implement a bistrategic combination of deviant and compliant behaviours. In this strategy, the two alternative behaviours are combined since deviant behaviours (e.g., different types of aggressiveness) are functionally adopted in order to obtain the popularity status.

By building on this, the thesis advances that this perspective can be useful to understand the presence of deviant/assertive behaviours in the foreign policy of status seekers.

The idea is that, status seekers that are clearly not challenging the system (they are not revolutionary systems) may implement deviant behaviours on purpose in order to accomplish the recognition of their self-advanced status.

This hypothesis, builds on a translation into IR terms of the main concepts, findings and implications derived from child developmental psychology – that is completed in the last part of chapter 3.

This section asserts that, by distinguishing between different types of status, and by considering that international status standing recalls the popularity status type identified in kid's studies (indeed both are reputational types of status that refer to the social rank/standing of the individual in the group), it is possible to advance a functional relation between deviant behaviours and international status seeking.

This section also advances the need to formulate a more nuanced outline of the concept of *deviance* also in the IR literature. Deviance is what is deviant from social norms and rules, and this has to be considered together with the distinction between what is socially undesirable (deviant) and what is socially dysfunctional. Indeed, the traditional perspectives on social interactions have built on a tacit overlap between these two distinct elements.

The updated version of child developmental psychology opens the way to the possibility of conceiving that deviant behaviours (those behaviours that are socially undesired) may still prove socially functional.

It is by building on these elements that chapter 4 addressed and analyses the behavioural strategies that Italy, under Mussolini's government (in the 1920s), adopted in order to pursue its great power status.

The selection of this case study was motivated by the fact that Italy in those years officially presented itself as a status seeker, but notwithstanding this its international standing was far from being as socially compliant as possible.

Indeed, the Italian foreign policy of those years is commonly known for its fits of temper – that literature has tried to understand and justified in different ways, by recalling various reasons.

The analysis of the case study, by focussing on some of the more debated and discusses episodes (e.g. the Corfu crisis; the 1926 declaration of the Italian imperial ambitions) and also on the main features of Italian foreign policy (e.g. Italian revisionism), allows to closely investigate the behavioural strategies that Italy has adopted to accomplish its recognition process.

The analysis builds on historical literature, but also and especially on internal documents concerning speeches and also diplomatic documents in which it is possible to find the messages exchanged between Mussolini and the Italian diplomatic corp.

The investigation of the diplomatic documents in particular has allowed to highlight that Mussolini and his colleagues had consciously adopted (and suggested to adopt) an assertive standing in the Italian foreign policy, this in function of its status seeking aims.

Italy was indeed looking to be recognized as a great power – Mussolini continuously insisted on the importance of the Italian prestige – and the Italian government pursued this aim by adopting what was defined an *obstructionist attitude*.

Mussolini was intransigent, adopted verbal aggressiveness and also relational aggressiveness (see section 2.3.2 of chapter 4), and continuously insisted on the Italian rights to have its compensations, this all, in order to establish the principle that Italy was a great power (a Mediterranean great power) and that it had to be treated as an equal by the other European great powers (France and Great Britain *in primis*).

Therefore, the main contribution of this work is that, by building on the conclusions achieved by developmental psychology, and supported by the results of the case study analysis, it is possible to advance that, contrary to the current theoretical expectations that want the status seeker to perform exclusively compliant

behaviours in its status seeking process, there are good reasons to claim that, in the international arena as well, states seeking for reputational status type do perform a combination of deviant and compliant behaviours. Moreover, hints emerging from Italian diplomatic documents suggest that not only Italy was conscious of its behavioural strategy, but also its European interactors.

These conclusions contribute to the literature concerning the recognition, the status seeking and the socialization processes. All the three literatures address the same interaction process from different perspectives.

What is interesting of these conclusions is the fact that they challenge the normative feature intrinsically characterizing the current IR theory on recognition process. indeed, as it was for developmental psychology that for years was characterized by a tacit *social engineering* ethos, similarly in IR literature it is possible to find an overlap between what the international society recommends its status seeking candidates to do (to perform behaviours that are as conforming as possible to international social norms and expectations) and how the theory describes the effective status seeking processes (what states actually do). The aim of this research was to focus primarily on understanding what states actually do in order to obtain their status recognition. the thesis has indeed favoured a perspective focussed on the status seeker.

It is important to also underline that in the IR literature it is possible to find studies that already went in the same direction that this thesis pointed at. An important example is the study by Bátorá (2013) in which the author underlines that, observing Slovakia's behaviour during its process to gain membership to NATO and after the process was successful it emerged that, Slovakia, one entered NATO started adopting more assertive behaviours on the issues upon which wanted to be more autonomous.

In line with these results from Bátorá's study, this thesis addresses social interactions which take place in an environment different from an international institution, and adds to Bátorá's conclusions the idea that – outside from international institutions – the more assertive behaviours are implemented also before the positive accomplishment of the status seeking process. More precisely, they are implemented specifically in function on this process.

The contribution of this research, open more room for further investigation in this direction. Indeed, it would be interesting to directly investigate the differences between the socialization/recognition process that takes place within international institutions and the one that takes place in the international arena in general.

Another interesting contribution of this work is the emerging suggestion that – as it was asserted by developmental studies with regard to kids – in the international arena as well there is the consciousness that status seeking is a process that has articulated components. In other words, some studies showed that kids had a clue on how the process to seek popularity worked, this consciousness was common both to the kids that aimed and obtained popularity and also to the kids that didn't (it is possible to say that they constituted the audience).

In the analysis of the Mussolinian foreign policy and the Italian status seeking of its great power status, it clearly emerged that Mussolini and his government collaborates were conscious of their strategy and of the tactics they were adopting ahead of this aim. But it also emerged that Chamberlain had a clear understanding of the Italian strategy. Similarly, it could be possible to advance the idea that France's resistance to the Italian requests, somehow suggests that Paris too had an idea of what Italy was seeking for, and France was playing its same game.

Therefore, this opens room for a further investigation on the distinction between types of socializations that take place at the level of individuals and the one that take place in the international arena. This relates to the fact that in their outline of the socialization process Long and Hadden (1985) insist on the fact that the aim of socialization between individuals is to select and prepare new candidates. Yet, on the opposite, it seems that international socialization is characterized by a further feature of competition.

Another contribution recalls the fact that the Italian case study here analysed, confirms that Italy was seeking for material compensations because of their intrinsic value that would have contributed to increase the Italian prestige. This contributes to the need to revise the relation between status/prestige and material power. Do states seek for prestige in order to gain material power, or do states seek for material achievements in order to improve their social status and prestige?

The conclusions of this research support the second option (see Stefanachi 2015).

In conclusion, this research calls for further studies on a point that it is not addressed here but that is still interesting to understand: the case study here analysed corresponds to a particular type of political system. Indeed, Mussolini was guiding a fascist government and, with years, turned Italy into a fascist regime. It is legitimate to wonder if these Italian assertive behaviours were related to this. In other words, did Italy adopt this type of behavioural strategy because it was led by an authoritarian regime?

The answer that this work advances is that, there is continuity in the Italian foreign policy ambitions and also strategies since its reunification at the end of the 19th century; as an example, it is possible to report that Italy pursued its colonial extension also during the liberal governments. Yet, further research in this direction would be useful to clarify this doubt.

It is also important to mention some of the limits of this research.

The first limit to mention here, is a conscious and voluntary limitation that this research has had since its beginning. This study indeed is limited to identifying the co-presence of behaviours and to identify a relation between deviant behaviours and status seeking strategies and aims. It doesn't aim at analysing more in details the functionality of these behaviours. Indeed, another suggestion for further research is to focus also on investigating the effectiveness of these behavioural strategies.

Moreover, an important limitation relates also to the fact that the research has focussed exclusively on understanding the Italian behavioural strategy adopted in order to pursue its status seeking ambition. The problem is that when analysing foreign policies, it is always difficult to clearly cut a distinction between domestic and foreign affairs. Indeed, in line with this, it is possible to recall that historiography has advanced different reasons to explain the apparent *schizophrenia* characterizing the Italian foreign policy in those years, among these explanations, various mentions have addressed the absence of a real strategy in foreign policy, and also the prevalence of national politics on foreign one (see for example the relation between propaganda and the strong assertive international declarations).

With regard to this, it is possible to say that, this research has no intention to turn down these explanations. Yet, the focus of the research was specific and aimed at investigating the relation between deviant behaviours and status seeking strategy.

Moreover, the reference to internal documents help to support also the validity of the conclusions here achieved.

The last clarification to be made here is that, as it was advanced by peer relation scholars, there is no intention to support with the thesis the idea that aggressiveness is a good or positive behaviours. The sole purpose of this research was to understand how international interactions are characterized.

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